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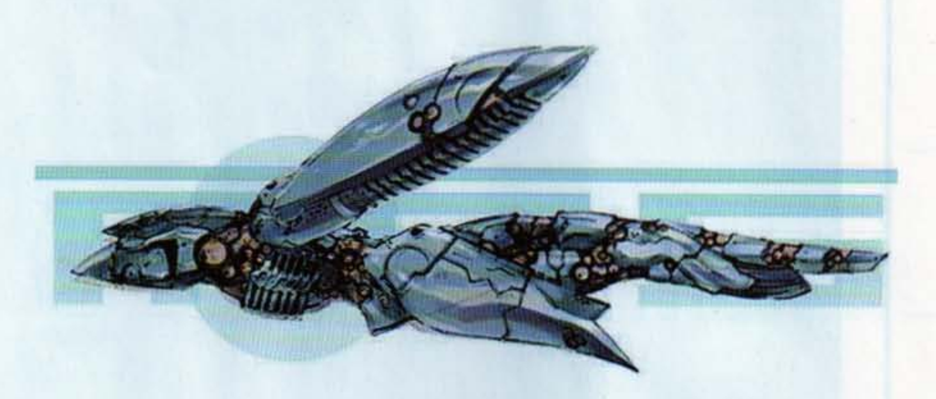


DREAMCAST ■ PLAYSTATION ■ PS2 ■ N64 ■ PC ■ X-BOX ■ DOLPHIN

METAL GEAR SOLID 2

THE *REAL* STORY BEHIND THE PLAYSTATION2 REVOLUTION


NOKIA



It is the evening of May 10, 2000. Tens of thousands of videogame industry execs are descending like locusts upon LA. Somewhere in the city, **Hideo Kojima** is telling confidantes that he feels nervous. Tomorrow, his latest creation, the follow-up to *Metal Gear Solid*, is set to make its grand debut on a jumbo video screen at E3, and he's not entirely confident that it will receive a warm reception from cynical attendees.

If ever an emotion were misplaced, then surely it was this one. Sure, it took a while for news to get around. Indeed, when **Edge**'s travelling party first visited the Konami stand at 11am on May 11, only a handful of showgoers were gorging on the nine-minute presentation. After that, however, word spread like a virus, and by the afternoon of May 13, the area in front of Konami's stand had become an impromptu cinema overflowing with hundreds of gamers seeking to witness how Kojima-san is rolling back videogame boundaries.

On the other side of the hall, Oddworld Inhabitants spokespeople were telling journalists about the difficulties they were having developing for Sony's latest console. On the Sony stand itself, meanwhile, a number of limp-looking PlayStation2 efforts gave credence to such gripes.

But try asking Kojima-san how his team has found working with this convoluted architecture. **Edge** did, querying the Konami team's use of middleware. "We waited for the tools to arrive," Kojima-san admitted, "but they never turned up, so we built our own from scratch."

This, perhaps more than anything, is the reason why *Metal Gear Solid 2* is breathtaking – because it is a labour of devotion. Instead of carping about problems, Kojima-san and his team have simply dived in, got their hands dirty, and let the results speak for themselves. It's an example other codeshops could do well to learn from.

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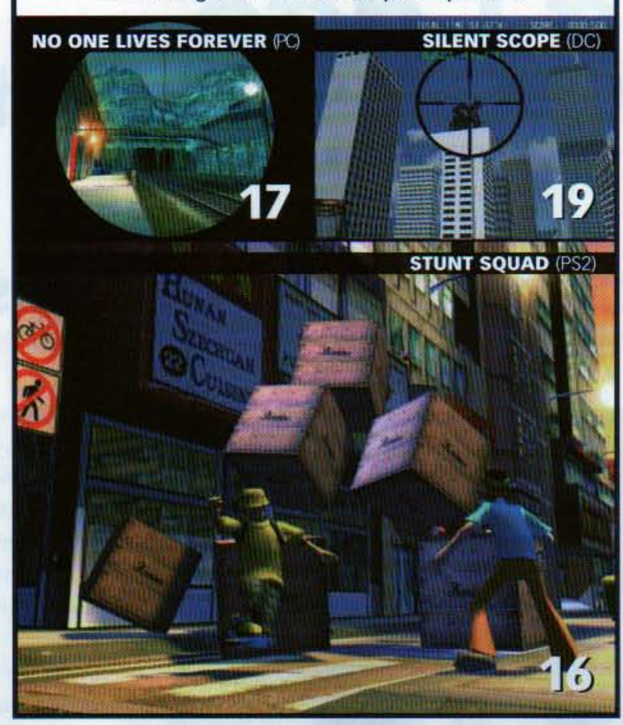
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PRESCREEN 15

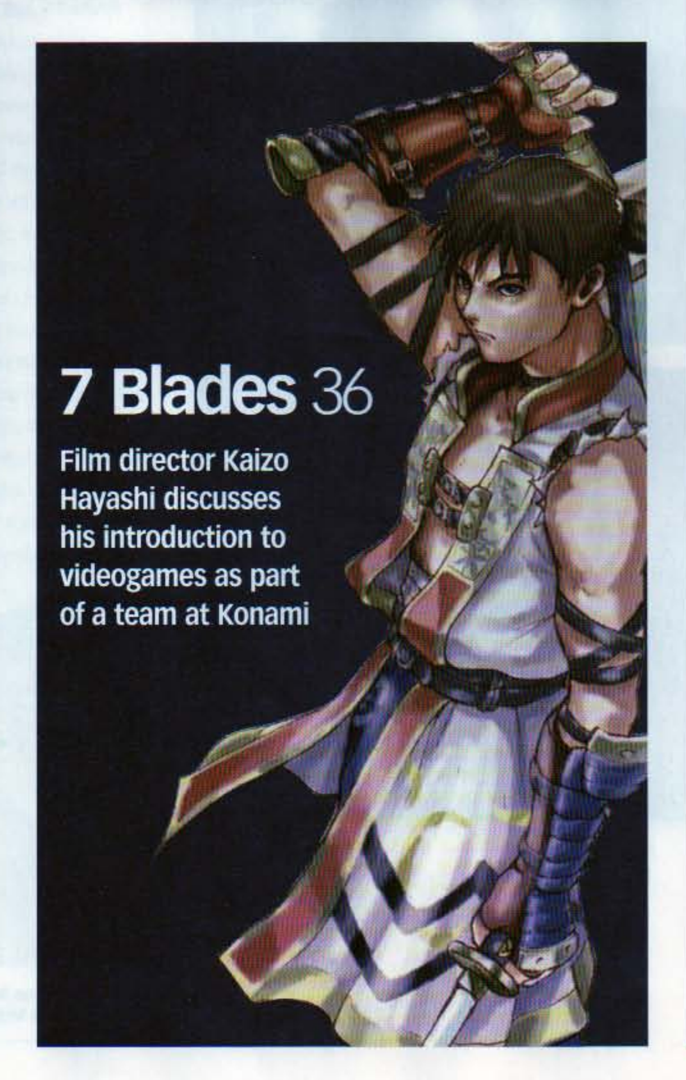
Criterion lets secret PS2 hoverboard game out of the bag while *Silent Scope* impresses



BattleRealms 28



Edge discovers a genre-busting RTS from Liquid



7 Blades 36

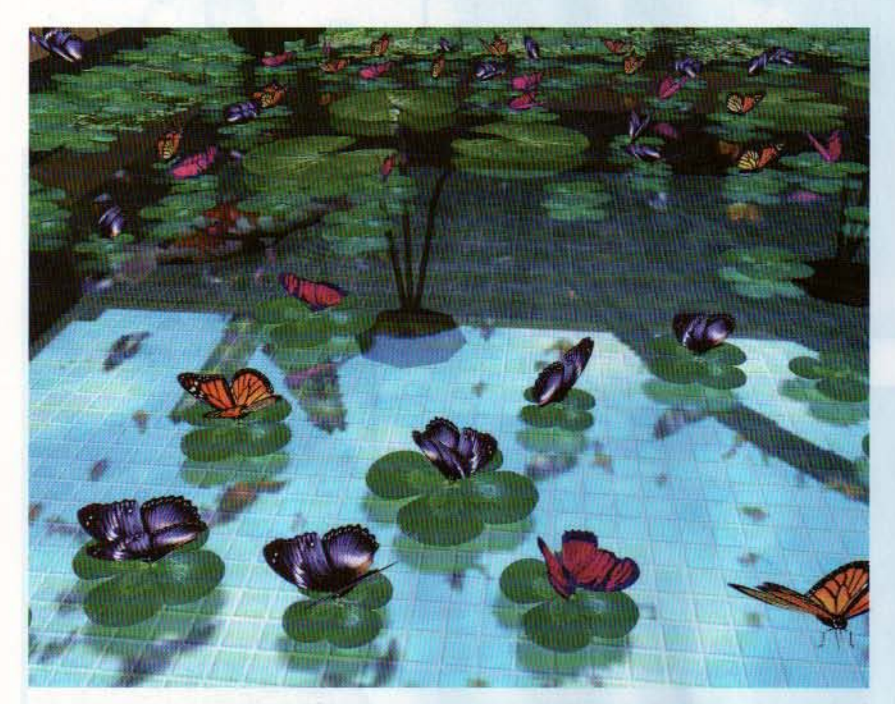
Film director Kaizo Hayashi discusses his introduction to videogames as part of a team at Konami

Cutting Edge

The latest news from the world of interactive entertainment

MICROSOFT UPS CPU ANTE AS X-BOX DEV KITS SHIP

Seattle giant's console strategy takes new twist at E3, while publishers begin to pledge commitment to the format





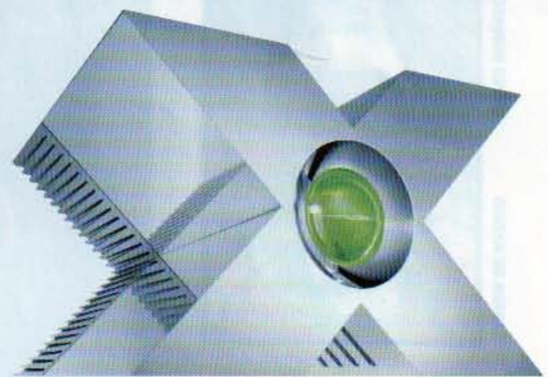
In the absence of actual game code, Microsoft wheeled out its glorious realtime-visuals demos once more. This time, however, as well as underlining intricate graphical effects – such as the slight rippling of the water's surface as each butterfly touched down on foliage (above) – tech guru Seamus Blackley was at pains to reveal how an X-Box-specific DirectMusic API could enhance a scene: as the butterflies move, the audio score adapts a given composition in accordance with motion. The results? Beautiful

Microsoft has begun shipping X-Box dev kits to key partners in its next-generation console push. The company has also confirmed to **Edge** that the finished hardware will use a 733MHz x86 CPU rather than the previously mooted 600MHz unit.

Tokyo-based Koei is the first publisher to publicly admit taking delivery of the hardware. The company was one of the first developers in the world to show PlayStation2 game images (with *Kessen*), and it is believed to be working on a handful of strategy titles for Microsoft's machine.

Meanwhile, at E3 in LA, Microsoft's PR machine stepped up a gear with its X-Box hype drive. The now-infamous girl-and-robot demo was shown behind closed doors running in a realtime state, revealing some extraordinary metallic surfaces reflecting the action in a supremely realistic manner. Seamus Blackley, Microsoft Games' director of advanced technology, maintained that the performance of the demo unit (containing an NV15 graphics chip) represents ten per cent of the final box's power, although other developers at E3 relayed to **Edge** that 15 per cent was the figure they'd been given.

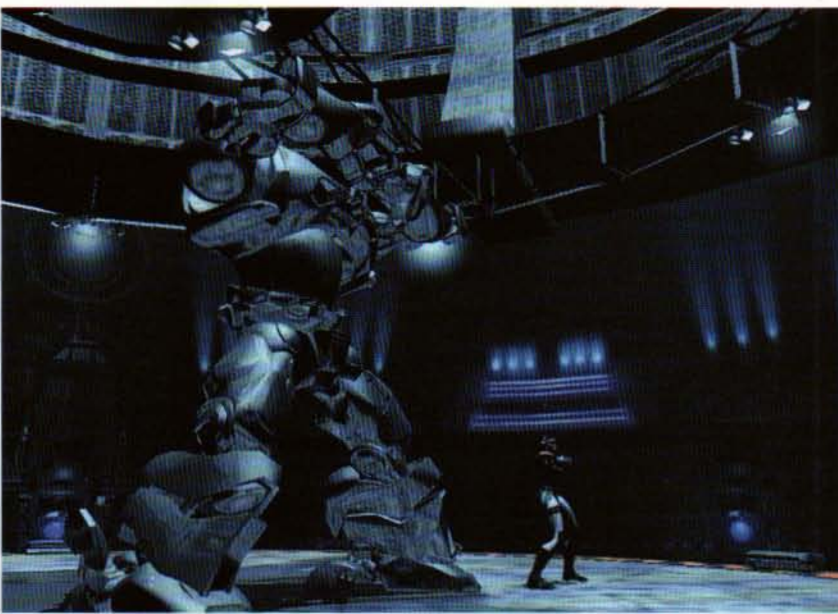
A lack of actual X-Box game demos was one of the biggest disappointments of the event for many attendees. **Jay Allard**, Microsoft's X-Box platform general manager, told **Edge** that working game demos were not being shown because the company is not ready to publicise its portfolio of titles, "but we actually have code running and a lot of publishers writing it." He wouldn't be drawn on the development resources that Microsoft itself will be



The silver X-Box hardware image was all over E3. Some insiders suggest X-Box to be the final name







The realtime girl-and-robot demo (all three shots) may not hold as much detail as the original prerendered version (Seamus Blackley claimed not to have a figure for the amount of polys evident in the scene), but the results wowed the Japanese coders Edge viewed the demo with

assembling for X-Box, but he did point out that the company's current games publishing group would form a ready source of talent because of the obvious synergy that exists between PC and X-Box architecture.

When pressed on the advantages of X-Box over PS2, Allard highlighted the advantages that network connection will bring: "When we looked at X-Box and its design, we said we need to change the rules. We need to give developers more clay. So more graphics, more sound, etc. We're very proud of what we're doing on those fronts, but fundamentally the hard disk and networking is the new clay for them to play with. And you think about a Formula One game, where the statistics get downloaded every Sunday after the race happens, you think about a boxing game where you can download new boxers because you've already played through a new fighting game. It changes the dynamics in a very powerful way, and the hard disk coupled with the network makes perfect sense. I think console gamers are ready for networking, and our strong heritage with the PC and the Internet capabilities are going to come to bear here."

He also drew attention to X-Box's hard drive: "Synthesis falls short without persistence. So we think persistence is a natural complement to synthesis, and an important one." Taking the concept of dynamic terrain as an example, he went on: "How do you save a game when you've generated a fractal landscape? You have to save the fractal landscape. So we think it will create a more realistic environment. Think about skidmarks at Silverstone hanging around."

In the face of Sony's claim to be providing more than simply a videogame console, Allard was bullish: "Can you play movies on X-Box? Yes. Can you play music on X-Box? Yes. Where is the technical innovation? Where is the investment in the hard disk, the powerful graphics chip? Why are we putting a 733MHz chip in the box? Not to watch a movie, but *play* a movie."

A lack of actual X-Box game demos was one of the biggest disappointments of E3 for many attendees. Microsoft said it was not ready to publicise its portfolio of titles

Retail comes calling

Allard also revealed that Microsoft has spent the months between San Jose's Game Developers Conference and E3 talking to retailers: "The retailers are all lined up – all the broad retailers are very, very, excited about working with us and we're talking to them about floor space, about final packaging, about having demo units in the stores, all that's underway. And we've started to work with publishers in the final business terms. What we've heard from consumers and retailers is that it's very important to be consistent. They like the consistent packaging, they like a uniform brand. One thing they struggle with regarding PCs is the non-uniform packaging, the non-uniform brand and the lack of clear compatibility requirements."

Above all, though, Microsoft wants X-Box to be judged on the games produced for it: "As you know, it's a publishing, developer-oriented business, so we're signing publishing deals to publish several different X-Box titles with several different developers. The bottom line is that the partners that are most critical are the creatives that are going to produce the content. That's what's going to be material in customer's minds. They don't go to the store and say, 'It's a black box, it's a blue box, which one do I want?', they say, 'I want this game, and this game looks best on X-Box'."

New technology for Sega coin-ops

PowerVR Technologies, a division of Imagination Technologies, has announced the development of the next stage in Sega's arcade hardware. The PowerVR 2DC graphics processor is currently at the heart of both the Dreamcast and the Naomi arcade board.

The new technology enhances the PowerVR architecture with an advanced co-processing engine, hardware geometry transform and lighting to reduce the load on the CPU. Although previous Sega titles have made use of multiple Naomi boards – notably *F355 Challenge* – the new technology is more sophisticated, supporting the use of multiple rendering processors with a single geometry processor.

Sega is already hard at work on several titles that are expected to be released later this year, but no firm details had been released at the time of going to press.

KONAMI BRINGS LA TO HALT WITH **PLAYSTATION2 MAGIC**

Metal Gear Solid sequel proves more than enough to bring attendees of the world's largest game expo to their knees



Never in the history of trade videogame exhibitions has one individual element – machine, videogame, software company, whatever – stood so head and shoulders above all around it as at the Electronic Entertainment Expo at the LA Convention Center between May 11-13. Konami stopped the show, literally, on the hour, every hour, with a video presentation of *Metal Gear Solid 2* (see p42), the first game to give a real indication of what PlayStation2 can do when tickled in the right places.

Not that other exhibitors didn't make a spirited stab at grabbing the spoils. Microsoft, in an effort to replicate Sony's show-stealing PlayStation2 pyramid at last year's event, set up an X-Box booth providing regular technology demos.

Apart from *MGS2* and a handful of other PS2 titles, including the likes of *Dark Cloud* and *TimeSplitters*, Sony had a wretched E3. Many titles lacked polish (such was their early status), although a number of SCEE projects will no doubt merit further attention within these pages.

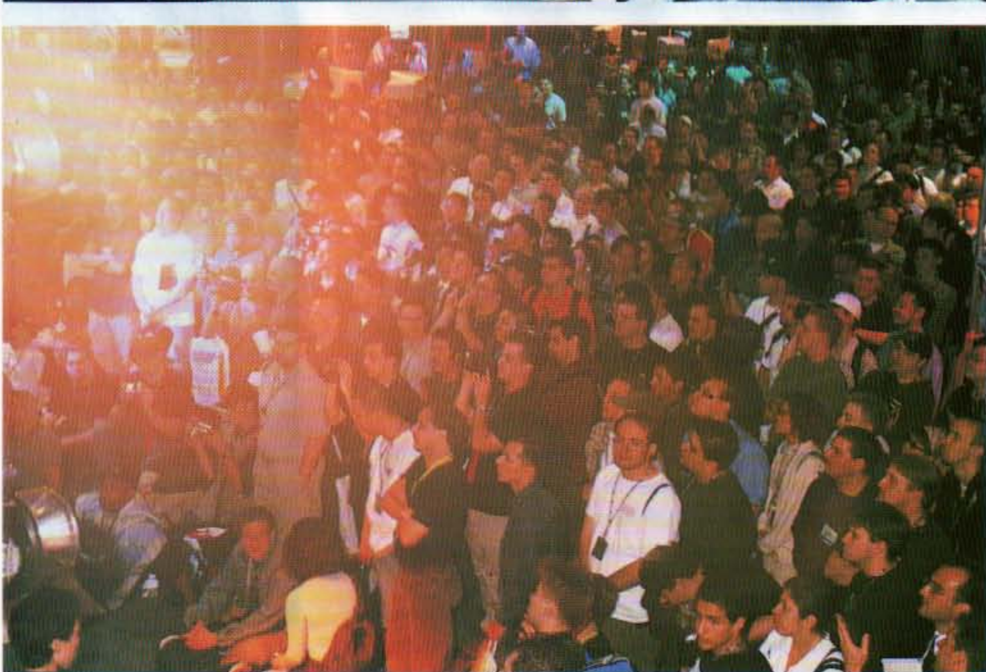


Nintendo did its best to spare blushes in the face of technology on display elsewhere, presenting *Majora's Mask*, *Dino Planet* and *Mario Tennis* to discerning crowds of gamers. Predictably, no mention was made of Dolphin, although a number of new shots of the IBM-developed Gecko processor were distributed by Nintendo PR execs in an effort to keep hype rolling.

But, just as last year, it was over on the Sega stand that the widest range of quality titles were to be found. In terms of putting on a show, no one did it better than the ailing giant, whose glitz-heavy presentations of *Jet Grind Radio* and *Space Channel 5* sat alongside the more sober video-screen debut of English-language *Shenmue*, most games succeeding in igniting the passions of passers-by. With a networked *Quake III* in playable form, plus all manner of other attractions from thirdparty publishers, Sega staff had good reason to smile.

Of the thirdparty publishers in attendance, it was clear that EA, taking centre stage in the south hall and no doubt paying top dollar for the privilege, is betting all its chips – at least in console terms – on PS2, the company's giant video wall playing host to a presentation overflowing with title after title for Sony's machine, from actioners such as *TWINE* to titles themed around every imaginable sport. With a clutch of enormously promising titles on its stand, Activision had one of the broadest ranges of games at E3, while Infogrames also underlined its heavyweight status with an enormous construction brimming over with licensed titles and the occasional gems such as *Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee* and *Alone In The Dark: The New Nightmare*.

Catch up with the highlights of E3 in detail starting on p50.



The weather in LA for this year's event was good – and Konami heated up the atmosphere further every time it kicked off its *Metal Gear Solid 2* presentation, ensuring it the attention of hundreds of dazzled attendees (above)



Microsoft's booth (left) attracted attendees eager to get a glimpse of what X-Box can do, even at only ten per cent of its target power and with no games to show. Nintendo drew its crowds with *Conker's BFD* (below left) and *Mario Tennis* (below centre)



















Sega took every opportunity to show strength in numbers (above left), and even offered a glimpse at new hardware (above centre). It still wasn't averse to pulling a few marketing stunts, though (above right). The appearance of *Quake III* was crucial for a company now pinning its hopes on online gaming

INTERIM ONLINE SOLUTION FOR PS2 IN OFFING

Bristol-based SN Systems announces release of TCP/IP Stack for use with USB modem

Despite Sega's attempt to steal a march on PlayStation2 in the arena of online gaming, Sony is resolutely sticking to its broadband guns. Sega's willingness to utilise narrowband technology has already seen the release of *Chu Chu Rocket* in Europe, and Sega of America launches its SegaNet online gaming network on September 7.

However, gamers who are hoping that Sony's console will have network connectivity when it is released in Europe and the US in October can still hold out some hope. Bristol-based SN Systems, which was responsible for developing the official PlayStation development tool chain, has announced the release of the SN TCP/IP Stack to provide developers with an interim network solution until Sony provies broadband connectivity. The SN TCP/IP Stack is supplied as an IOP executable file for use with a standard PlayStation2 dev kit, and enables developers to add network capabilities to their games via a USB modem.

In contrast to the creative range of uses for broadband connectivity that have been envisaged, the main rationale for a narrowband solution for PlayStation2 is straightforward online play. As **Andy Beveridge**, co-founder of SN Systems, says: "Everyone is raving about broadband lately but the real reason is likely not gameplay but the fact that it is a big future issue for electronic distribution of movies, music, etc.



***Quake III* could yet provide a significant shot in the arm to Dreamcast online use, and there's no doubt that a PS2 version would placate users frustrated by the foggy broadband picture**

Gamers who are hoping Sony's console will have network connectivity when it is released in Europe and the US in October can still hold out some hope thanks to a Bristol-based company

"I suspect all the console manufacturers are planning something more substantial than just an Internet connection – they will want to provide the whole service and there will be a lot they can do to provide additional value and distinguish themselves from other 'providers'.

"This has little to do with online linked gaming, though. People forget that developers have been finding modems quite adequate for a good number of online games for many years. Modems will probably remain the cheapest and easiest and most common way to get online for quite some time yet." This sentiment was backed up by a major publisher that **Edge** spoke to, which seemed to be evaluating the TCP/IP Stack purely in terms of head-to-head play, without considering alternate uses such as downloadable levels.



The SN Systems product should enable PS2 to support online games such as *Unreal Tournament*

The lengthy roll out of broadband infrastructure in Europe and the UK looks set to delay the implementation of Sony's own network solution. "I think they're looking at the bigger picture," says Beveridge. "They want to provide a solution not just for broadband connection from the PS2, but the whole network side of it."

In the meantime, while a number of thirdparty developers are evaluating the software, it is too early to say how widespread use of SN's technology will be. With a common standard for USB modems already in existence, though, there is a possibility that online gaming will be available to PS2 owners when the console launches.

All change at Sega

Shoichiro Irimajiri has announced he will step down as president of Sega of Japan after the company revealed its third straight year of loss. Isao Okawa, chairman of Sega's parent company CSK, will take over. All existing software R&D units, bar Group #2, are to be reinvented as separate divisions, with new names as follows:

AM R&D#1 becomes WOW
R&D#3 becomes Hit Maker
R&D#4 becomes Amusement Vision
R&D#5 becomes Sega Rosso
R&D#6 becomes Smile Bit
R&D#7 becomes Over Works
R&D#8 becomes Sonic Team
R&D#9 becomes United Game Artists
Digital Media Production Group becomes Wave Master

Irimajiri-san will now focus on a successor to Dreamcast, suggesting that Sega of Japan is to focus on its online strategy.

PLAYSTATION GAMES ON DREAMCAST A REALITY

Sega set to gain enormous software catalogue boost overnight thanks to efforts of innovative LA codeshop

The emu scene gained an unexpected host platform on May 11, as the *bleem!* development team revealed its PlayStation emulator for Dreamcast. LA-based bleem!, inc. intends to ship four iterations of the software later this summer, each supporting 100 leading PlayStation titles. All will offer technical enhancements, including a 640x480 resolution, and will retail for $20 (£13).

Seemingly such an unlikely occurence that it even featured in a previous **Edge** April Fool piece (see **E**70), the arrival of a PS emulator for DC was one of the talking points of E3. Cheekily reversing Sony's 1999 attempt to have the PC version ejected from the show, bleem! armed itself with an injunction against Sony staff coming near its booth.

Edge witnessed *Omega Boost* and *GT2* running on DC via *bleem!*, and was impressed by the quality of both. Certainly the former benefited hugely from the added full-screen antialiasing and bi-linear filtering offered by the emulator – effects which PS2's emu system does not offer.

Although other parties currently offer PlayStation joypad adaptors for Dreamcast, bleem! is to partner with a 'major hardware manufacturer' to produce a similar device, complete with a VM slot for game saving.

At the time of **Edge** going to press neither Sony nor Sega were available for comment.









Though *bleem!* used *Omega Force* and *Gran Turismo* for its E3 demos, it has since tested its emu with *Ridge Racer Type 4*. The 640x480 resolution benefit on DC (right column) is clearly evident

Bringing 32bit games to 128bit: bleem! VP explains (nearly) all

Curious to learn more about bleem!, inc. and its controversial code, **Edge** cornered vice-president **William Kempe** (right) at the company's E3 stand.

Edge: What is Sony's position regarding your product – have its lawyers come knocking yet?
William Kempe: It's hard to say, seeing as we just launched this on Thursday. Sony hasn't done anything yet. They have deep pockets and it appears they have nothing better to do at times, even though it will do nothing but increase their sales.
Edge: Has Sega commented yet?
WK: I don't think that they have any sort of official comment. I would imagine that they would be reasonably excited. It can actually only help both companies.
Edge: Are you a licensed thirdparty publisher for Dreamcast?
WK: No. We have no affiliation with Sega or Dreamcast whatsoever.
Edge: So how are you publishing the GD-ROM, given that it is a proprietary format?
WK: It's just a regular CD-ROM, not a GD.
Edge: How are you bypassing the OS?
WK: In the same way we made *bleem!* – Randy Linden is probably the greatest programmer in the world in this field. He's a genius. No one can believe what he's done. It's just a piece of software. You just drop the disc into the Dreamcast machine, put in the game, and off you go.
[Edge contacted Kempe after returning to the UK to clarify this point, but he would only state that: "Unfortunately we are not commenting on the disc."]
Edge: What is the strategy behind breaking the emulator over four discs?
WK: There are a number of reasons, one of which is that we want to lower the price point to make it an impulse buy. But really we're in this endless situation of offering updates – if a game comes out on Thursday, by Friday morning we have 1,000 emails asking when *bleem!* will play it. By making it a finite amount – it plays these 100 games, that's all – then there's no argument.
Edge: What are able to say about your



plans for sales in the UK market?
WK: The Sony intimdation and domination of the retail channel is perplexing and very annoying to me. What I'm hoping is that this will spearhead *bleem!* into the UK. There's never any proof, but it's slightly alarming that *bleem!* [on PC] has sold 50,000 copies in Germany but only 500 in the UK.
Edge: What kind of sales are you hoping for in the US this year?
WK: I would be very disappointed if we didn't sell a million copies by the end of the year.

Molyneux to quit PC for X-Box

Lionhead chief Peter Molyneux's next project is likely to be an exclusive X-Box project. Speaking to Edge at E3, he commented that: "I think the way forward is to specialise. I realised that I have never really done a console game. So it seems the perfect to try that challenge, doing something on a next-generation machine."

While claiming that the host platform for his next title, code-named *Dimtri* (which is unrelated to Molyneux's other project, *Dojo*), was yet to be selected, his intimacy with Microsoft is well known. Of the game itself he would only add that: "What I'd like to do as my first console game is focus on the fact that its very different to doing a PC game. But also try and do something fairly unique and original and different again." Lionhead's first title, the promising *Black & White*, is due to go Alpha on June 19.

PRESCREEN

EDGE PREMIERES INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT'S FRESHEST FACES

Past participant

Could the true golden age of gaming be about to dawn?

Edge is as guilty as any of occasionally reminiscing about the 'good old days' of gaming. A time when graphical considerations were almost an afterthought to gameplay brilliance and corporate publishers were more concerned about customer satisfaction than hyping a game. These were the days when the likes of *Starquake*, *Matchpoint*, *Uridium* and *Lords of Midnight* provided healthy discussion for the playground. Lazy film-inspired games were still thin on the ground, and those that were rarely obtained the necessary licences.

That such an era existed is as ridiculous as believing a sudden renaissance in art and culture dragged Europe out of the Dark Ages in the mid 15th Century. Yes, perhaps there was an endearing innocence and naivete about the industry during its infancy. Coders would give advice, swap ideas, even program routines to build a community and encourage talent. This was just a hobby, after all, not a 'proper' job. Most already worked nine to five at the bank, or needed to relieve the stress of revising for a geography 'O' level.

The golden age of gaming, this unspecified period somewhere in between *Pong* and the emergence of the Super Famicom, with a little considered reflection was just as creatively inconsistent as any period afterwards. For every *Tir Na Nog* there were ten titles of the calibre of Atari's *ET* waiting to be returned to the retailer. Fact is, the rich seam of videogame gems was a sliver compared to today's wedge. With the advent of improved technology and graphical splendour all that has changed is the difficulty in separating the gold from the pyrite.

This year's E3 was proof that there has been no better time to get into gaming. The medium is almost unrecognisable from its *Pong* roots, and Sega's stand, with its emphasis on online play, has been the strongest indication yet that the Internet will change the manner if not the essence of the videogame experience. Such an application could not have been envisaged 25 years ago – and 25 years hence? All that can be predicted with any probability is that online play will be tame compared to what replaces it.

With games like *Half-Life*, *Phantasy Star Online*, and *Black & White* all coming to the format this year, Sega has finally made its platform a must-have for the hardcore and mainstream consumer. Don't even ask whether you should wait for PlayStation2: just buy both.






From *Pong* to *Matchpoint*, and the most recent iteration of the sport, *Virtua Tennis*, progress in both graphics and gameplay is apparent. Would you really want to go back to the 'golden age'?

Edge's most wanted

Identifying the hottest incoming blips






Tony Hawk's PS 2

(PS) Activision

Much improved sequel to a surprisingly replayable skateboarding videogame. Refined control method, better visuals, more tricks, more parks, level editor...

Metal Gear Solid 2

(PS2) Konami

Because it redefines the concept of a videogame. Because it looks fabulous. Because it's the sequel. Because it will obliterate everything around it.

Conker's Bad Fur Day

(N64) Rare

A very good game may well be hiding beneath all of the controversy that will inevitably surround its release. **Edge** looks forward to finding out.

F355 Challenge

(DC) Sega

Sega embellishes its top notch conversion of **Edge**'s coin-op of the year (see **E**82) by adding new tracks and possible extra play modes for DC.

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PRESCREEN ALPHAS

A NUMBER OF NEW FACES JOIN THE E3 OVERSPILL AS EDGE SIFTS THROUGH THE GAMING WORLD'S LATEST ARRIVALS

STUNT SQUAD & SRC

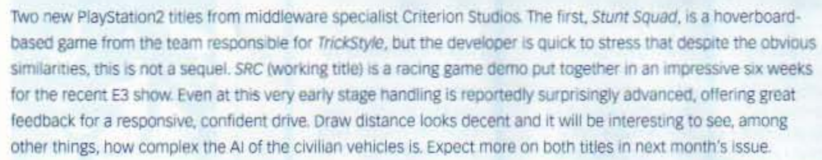
FORMAT: **PS2** DEVELOPER: **CRITERION**











Two new PlayStation2 titles from middleware specialist Criterion Studios. The first, *Stunt Squad*, is a hoverboard-based game from the team responsible for *TrickStyle*, but the developer is quick to stress that despite the obvious similarities, this is not a sequel. *SRC* (working title) is a racing game demo put together in an impressive six weeks for the recent E3 show. Even at this very early stage handling is reportedly surprisingly advanced, offering great feedback for a responsive, confident drive. Draw distance looks decent and it will be interesting to see, among other things, how complex the AI of the civilian vehicles is. Expect more on both titles in next month's issue.

NO ONE LIVES FOREVER

FORMAT: **PC/PS2** DEVELOPER: **MONOLITH**



From the team behind the likeable PC actioner *Shogo* comes this story-driven firstperson shooter displaying the kind of outrageous villains and wry humour associated with '60s spy films as your character, Agent Archer, uncovers a conspiracy that threatens the world. **Edge** played the game at E3 and found it surprisingly compelling. In particular, the game's colourful graphics and mix of out/indoor exotic locations prove refreshing after countless hours spent wandering through mile after mile of brown-hued corridor. More than 30 weapons and gadgets can be found among the 15 oneplayer missions and ten multiplayer levels. Motorcycles and snowmobiles can also be commandeered.

SEGA EXTREME SPORTS

FORMAT: **DC** DEVELOPER: **SEGA**



Offering a selection of competition-based sports events including quads, mountain biking, hang-gliding and the slacker's favourite activity, snowboarding, this is a package aimed at the increasingly lucrative 'extreme' sector. At the time of going to press **Edge** was unable to secure any further details regarding this mystery title (these images cropped up on Sega's E3 press disc), though expect new events and further gameplay modes to be announced as *Sega Extreme Sports* nears its late-2000 US release. With UEP's recent update of *Cool Boarders* proving underwhelming, this could be a significant DC release.



JEREMY MCGRATH SUPERCROSS 2000

FORMAT: **DC/PS/N64** DEVELOPER: **ACCLAIM**



With the excellent *Excitebike 64* (see p88) having set the standard to beat for current motocross, **Edge** is hoping Acclaim's McGrath-licensed Dreamcast supercross title gets closer to it than the PlayStation outing currently doing the rounds. The eponymous eight-time AMA motocross champion designed every bike and eight of the 16 tracks on offer here, but you can add more circuits by kickstarting the game's level editor. An interesting addition – and something missing from *Excitebike 64* – is dynamic weather which affects outdoor track conditions, the added slip giving you more opportunity to witness the game's motion-captured crashes. In addition to 125cc and 250cc classes, a stunt competition is also included.







SILENT SCOPE

FORMAT: **DC/PS2** DEVELOPER: **KONAMI**



Shown in a room away from all of the US press hounds looking for the next big 'killer videogame', *Silent Scope* was running on a Dreamcast (shots shown). Fears that without the coin-op's sniper rifle the game would suffer irreparably were quickly dismissed as **Edge** picked up the pad for a quick shot. The sniper sight which appears at the centre of the screen is operated by pressing the right shoulder button and works surprisingly well in practice. Only the Arcade version of the game was open to play, though an Original mode option clearly appeared on the title screen (Konami representatives refused to comment on what this may constitute, however). Graphically, everything appears very close to the coin-op model.







STUNT GP

FORMAT: **DC** DEVELOPER: **TEAM 17**

Looking as colourful and funky as ever, Team 17's cute little racer is nearing its planned August release. Players are scored on speed, stunts and outrageous combos making use of the environmental aids available – anything from a standard jump ramp to flyovers, 360°s and loop-the-loops – in any one of 16 significantly different vehicles. In addition to the many circuits on offer, a Free-Fall Stunt Bowl enables some spectacular gravity-defying moves, while an accessory shop allows customisation of car performance and handling ability. Control promises to be intuitive, and despite the various positions your diminutive machine may find itself in the camera appears to handle the situation with remarkable ease.









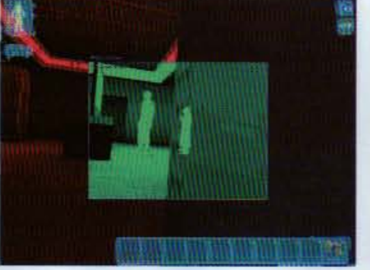
DEUS EX

FORMAT: **PC** DEVELOPER: **ION STORM**

Whatever damage to Ion Storm's reputation the predictably disappointing *Daikatana* may do (see p92), it's more than likely to be recuperated by *Deus Ex*, one of the more interesting PC developments on show at E3. Showing a genuine understanding of weapon balancing, as well as the necessary implementation of innovative gadgets, cutting-edge visuals, advanced enemy AI, structurally sound locales, strong narrative, and believable rules within the game world, the developer has created one of the most immersive, engaging and promising PC titles **Edge** has seen for some time. Eidos would do well to unleash the game as swiftly as possible in order to assist Ion Storm in the damage-limitation process.







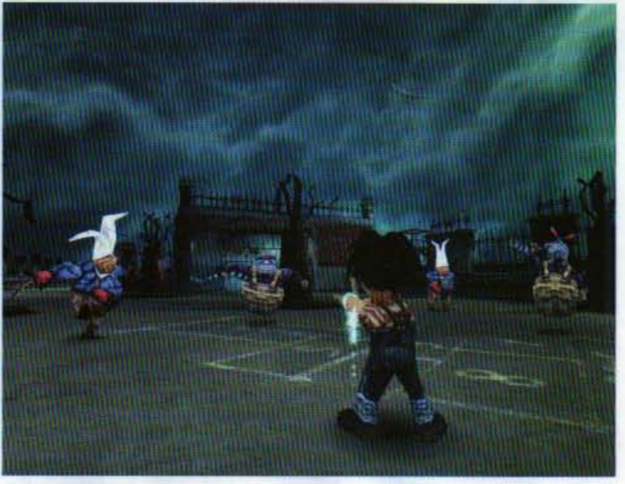


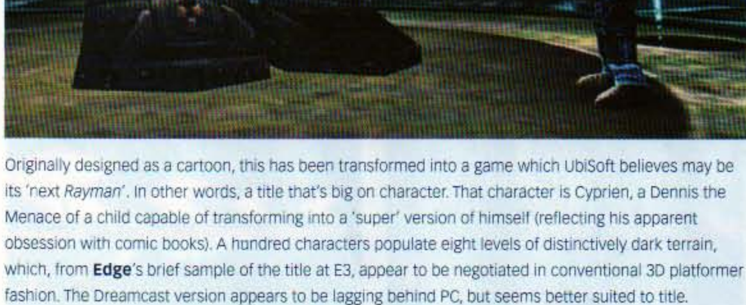
EVIL TWIN

FORMAT: **DC/PC** DEVELOPER: **IN UTERO**









Originally designed as a cartoon, this has been transformed into a game which UbiSoft believes may be its 'next *Rayman*'. In other words, a title that's big on character. That character is Cyprien, a Dennis the Menace of a child capable of transforming into a 'super' version of himself (reflecting his apparent obsession with comic books). A hundred characters populate eight levels of distinctively dark terrain, which, from **Edge**'s brief sample of the title at E3, appear to be negotiated in conventional 3D platformer fashion. The Dreamcast version appears to be lagging behind PC, but seems better suited to title.

RC DE GO

FORMAT: **PS** DEVELOPER: **TAITO**

Acclaim is set to bring this cheeky radio-controlled car racer to western shores in the autumn where its simplisitic yet cute (and perfectly functional) visuals combined with the diminutive nature of the vehicles involved and fun gameplay will hopefully see it perform well. A series of challenges are included as part of a training mode, allowing you to get to grips with the rapid responses associated with driving a scaled down racer. Both off-road and circuit-based competitions are offered with an appropriate selection of vehicles (anything from hatchback to Formula One and 4x4s to US sand buggies) to match. While racing, a turbo function can be used to knock opponents off-course. Expect to use it as you enter the later races.



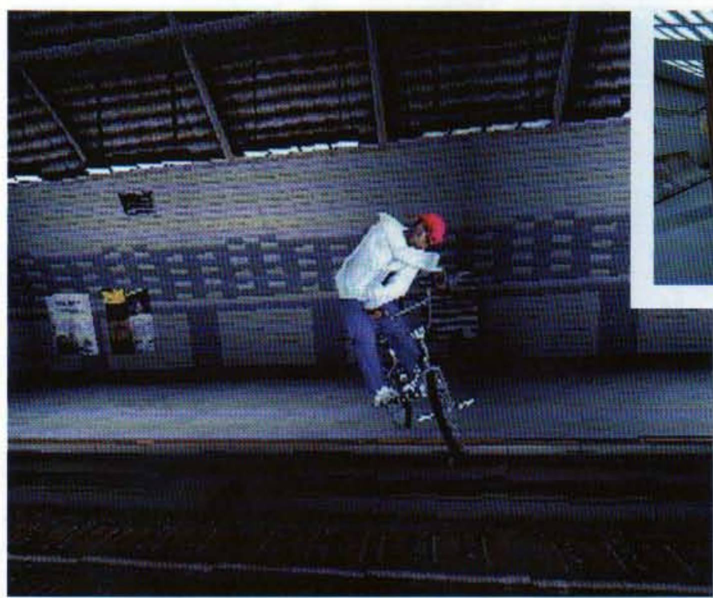






MAT HOFFMAN'S PRO BMX

FORMAT: **PS** DEVELOPER: **NEVERSOFT**






Given the (albeit initially unexpected) stellar success of *Tony Hawk's Skateboarding*, it's easy to see how Activision's marketing bods gave the green light to another extreme sports title in a similar vein. Using a very slightly tweaked version of the previous title's 3D engine, Neversoft is crafting a game offering vert, street and dirt jump levels, with various competitions and an interesting twoplayer splitscreen mode (how the PS will handle such action remains to be seen, however). Eight riders will be available, but it's unlikely that nine-times world champion Hoffman will be passed over too often.

PLANET OF THE APES

FORMAT: **DC/PC/PS** DEVELOPER: **VISIWARE**

While the PC version was announced at E3 last year, 12 months later it was the turn of the Dreamcast incarnation (shown here) of the polygonal adaptation of the groundbreaking Pierre Boulle book. *Planet of the Apes* pitts you as Ulysses, sole human survivor in a land ruled by chimpanzees, baboons and orangutangs, after your spaceship crashes on an unchartered planet 1,000 years in the future. While doing your best to stay alive, your advancement through the game's 15 massive levels slowly unravels the mystery surrounding the world you now inhabit. Original characters from the film (Dr Zauis, Zira, General Urses and Cornelius) also feature, and three play modes (stealth, normal, athletic) are offered.

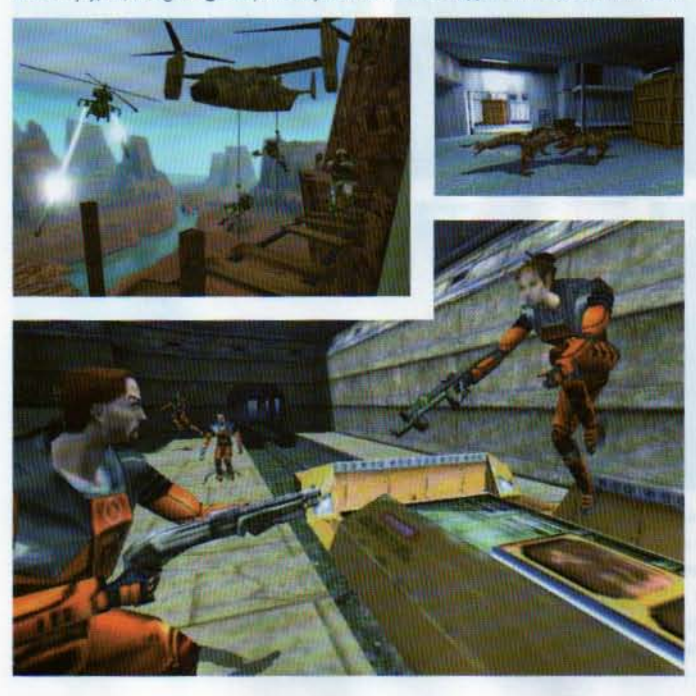





HALF-LIFE

FORMAT: **DC** DEVELOPER: **GEARBOX**

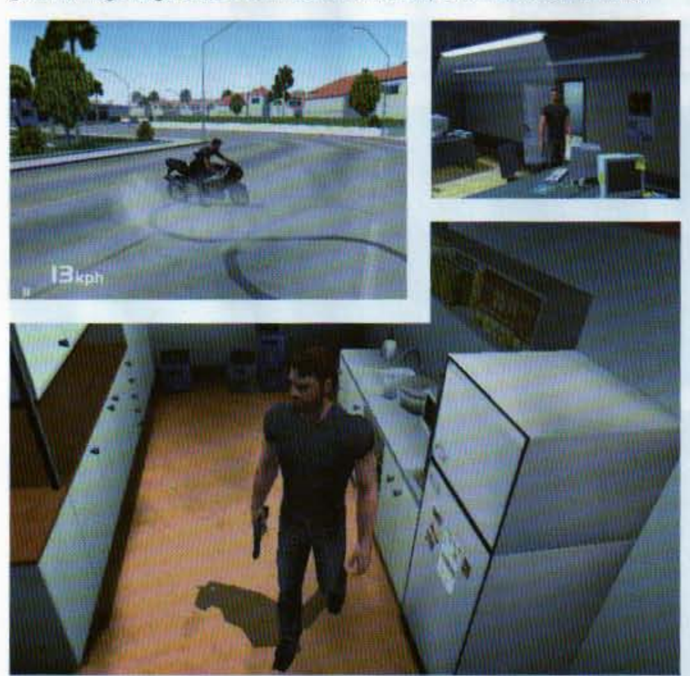
Shown at E3 in looping video form only, the conversion of the PC's greatest firstperson shooter appears to be developing very smoothly, with everything seemingly making it across for the game's first console outing. Control is believed to have been reasonably implemented using the DC's joypad, though **Edge** suspects keyboard and mouse support will make the final code.



HEADHUNTER

FORMAT: **DC** DEVELOPER: **AMUZE**

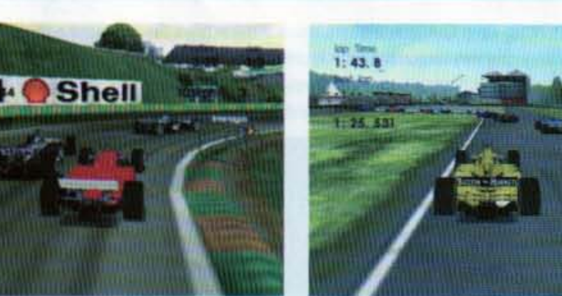
Another DC title hidden away among the 80 games found on Sega's stand was this action-packed, Swedish-developed effort. Visually competent, no details were given out concerning specific gameplay elements, though some bounty hunter derivative would appear appropriate given the images. Sega Europe's aural maestro Richard Jacques will take care of the tunes.



F1 WORLD GRAND PRIX II

FORMAT: **DC** DEVELOPER: **VIDEO SYSTEM**







Returning with an improved graphics engine, Video System's second Dreamcast F1 game currently feels more approachable than its predecessor, something that should no doubt please newcomers to the sport of virtual F1. As is now standard practice, all of the stats, cars, circuits, scenery and other bits and bobs are included, of course. The preview build **Edge** has received in the office proves very playable, and everything appears on track to satisfy the discerning DC owner looking for an F1 title. So long as they're not expecting anything too drastically different to any of the previous generation of F1 games, naturally.

VANISHING POINT

FORMAT: **DC/PS** DEVELOPER: **CLOCKWORK GAMES**



The Dreamcast version shown here has emerged over the last few weeks, obviously exuding a more polished and refined look than its 32bit cousin. Both versions currently suffer from far too little traction, with cars sliding around the road as if on a layer of oil, which makes keeping them even roughly pointed in the right direction something of a struggle. One new feature shown at E3 was the implementation of the 40 civilian vehicles, meaning you always have cars to negotiate as you attempt to make your way to the front of 40 competitors. Assuming you can keep your car going the right way, that is. But a delayed release until the autumn at least means the developer has plenty of time to sort these matters out.





EVIL DEAD: HAIL TO THE KING

FORMAT: **DC/PC** DEVELOPER: **T•HQ**



Everyone's favourite B-movie actor, Bruce Campbell, is providing the voiceover for this title (presumably while 'resting between projects'). The setup is predictable enough: as lead character Ash, you can use a wide range of weapons, from axes and rifles to shotguns and chainsaws, as you set about unravelling further secrets of the mysterious Necronomicon. T•HQ promises to incorporate the style of camerawork that made Sam Raimi's movies so distinctive, although there's no word yet on whether or not the twisted humour that also makes up such a large part of their appeal will also make the journey across. The game seems destined to be either an underground hit or yet another waste of fantastically rich subject matter.







VIRTUA TENNIS

FORMAT: **DC** DEVELOPER: **SEGA**

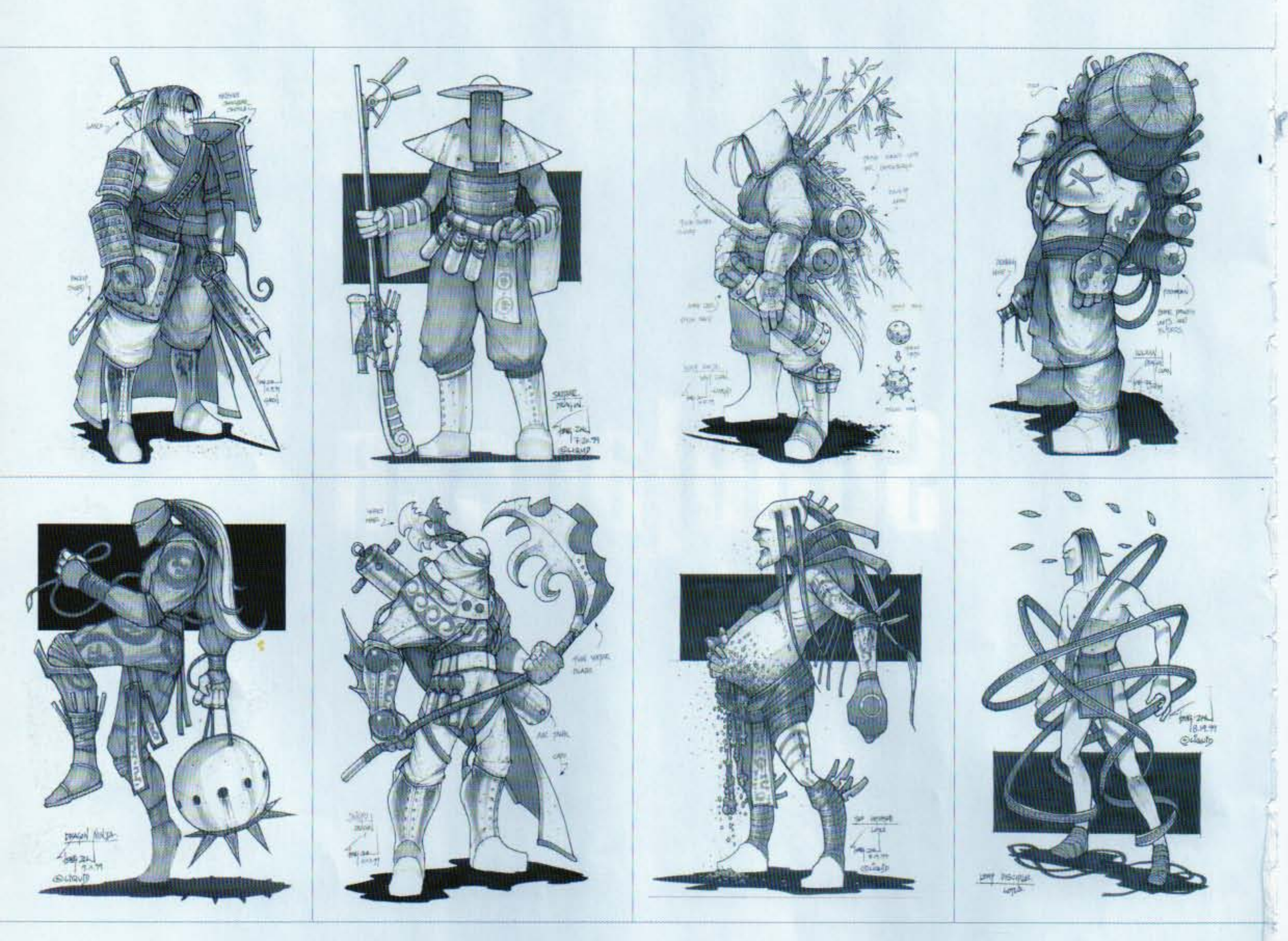
One of the most playable (and easily the most attractive-looking) tennis games **Edge** has had the pleasure to experience in the last 20-odd years, *Virtua Tennis* builds on an already impressively faithful arcade conversion by adding a plethora of home modes, including full season options, addictive practice challenges and – perhaps best of all – a magnificent fourplayer game that devours time with frightening ease. In creating a title that successfully mixes realism and playability, Sega's execution has been flawless. While UK DC owners face an agonising three-month wait for the September release, import gamers should be able to pick up a Japanese copy in July. There's always the preview code in **Edge**'s office...











BattleRealms

To Ed Del Castillo, videogames aren't a matter of life and death. They're much more important than that. His company Liquid Entertainment is preparing to wage war on a complacent industry with *Battle Realms*, its debut realtime strategy game

Format: **PC**

Publisher: **Crave**

Developer: **Liquid**

Release: **TBC**

Origin: **US**



One often wonders what the famous inventors of yesteryear would think of their creations today. Would Henry Ford fume at gridlock on the M25? Would the Internet engage the interest of Alexander Graham Bell? Videogame technology has moved so far, so fast, that the question is less rhetorical. What would the producer of the original *Command & Conquer* – and thus the entire realtime strategy genre – make of the desperate stagnation of such a promising game mould?

Edge asked him, and his answer was unequivocal: "Individuals in the industry who have done decent works are arrogant enough to think that they know everything. But this industry is not that stagnant yet. Every year, everything doubles. Our capacity to make a better game doubles. In an industry where everything is twice as good, every year, it's ridiculous to me that people are putting out another... *Red Alert*."

As producer, **Ed Del Castillo** was one of the key people behind the groundbreaking RTS title. He is now president and co-founder of California-based start-up Liquid Entertainment. He doesn't seem to have lost his interest in games – or talking about them – either: "Are you guys nuts? Can't you conceive of using the theoretical maximums of what you have today – or what you're going to have tomorrow? Businesspeople are so happy using the Microsoft model: 'Give them just a little bit more. Give them some cream cheese on their bread this time.


Name: **Rob Sandberg**
Job title: **IS manager**


Name: **Ed Del Castillo**
Job title: **Partner**


Name: **Mike Grayford**
Job title: **Partner**


The relatively low number of units in *Battle Realms* has allowed artists, like Feng Zhu (above), to up character detail



Sauté some onions for their bread this time'. But it's still the same old bread."

Del Castillo is more vocal about games than almost anyone in the business that **Edge** has met. He wants to make games that change people's lives. Early games such as *Sea Battle* on the Intellivision and Richard Garriot's *Ultima 3* convinced him he didn't have to become a lawyer or a doctor. He wants to do the same for others in the same position.

"Their model is one for an industry whose technologies have stagnated. You can get away with arrogance in cinema because a new camera comes out maybe every ten years. But for us, it's like we're getting Technicolour every year."

The lyric of Liquid

With words falling over words and tangents breaking off to follow new tangents, sitting through a demo from Del Castillo is like listening to verbal jazz. The game on the screen before him looks pretty enough, but the picture Del Castillo paints is stunning. *Battle Realms* the idea engages as the real one won't for another 12 months, but **Edge** can't wait. After the anti-climax of E3, *Battle Realms* comes as a breath of fresh air.

In devising it, Del Castillo and his partner Mike Grayford (another Westwood veteran) went back to basics. An idea for realtime strategy game grew out of Del Castillo's childhood obsession with martial arts movies. *Battle Realms* features the clashes of four fantasy-styled clans, with dark magic as well as katanas.

"In our universe, Yin and Yang have separated and these wars that are happening are as a result of them struggling to get back together again," explains Del Castillo.

But rather than simply swap the tanks of *C&C* with Samurai soldiers, Liquid is rethinking the genre from the ground up.

Realtime strategy suffers from myriad problems. Besides the fact that the games still often look dull and lifeless, there's the key problem that in nearly all, harvesting and managing resources takes precedence over fighting. The player who can build the most farms or mines wins. Strategy favours the general with the most troops in a huge mid-map maul.

"In most realtime strategies right now, combat is the most uninteresting part of the game, which is ridiculous," laments Del Castillo.

Liquid has two key ideas to address this: to put strategy back into the gameplay, and introduce life to the game. The company's bid to achieve the first goal has required a change of direction.

Where other games boast of increasingly large armies, Del Castillo expects the populations in *Battle Realms* to be relatively small, with a total size close to 50 units. The player will be able to closely control a smaller number of units, and to position them effectively with respect to their peers and the terrain. Capturing the high ground or fighting with archers at the back and spears at the front is therefore a realistic ambition, and one that will be rewarded. You'll also be able to choose from various battle-plans that take the fiddly work out of much of this, by putting selected units into loose groupings appropriate for, say, a cavalry charge or an archer cluster. On top of this, individual units count. The weaker units are relatively hard to kill and all have individual health and energy bars – the former representing damage, the latter the ability to cast magic or perform feats of strength. Both restore over time, which means it makes sense to withdraw units to preserve your force. Del Castillo hopes these factors will be added to the best of existing RTS combat – the 'paper, scissors, stones' combat skeleton, say – but does away with pointless free-


The mages of the four different clans (Serpent, Dragon, Lotus and Wolf) have different spells in their arsenals. Casting a spell drains a warlock's energy







To prevail in war, you have had to win strategic victories for resouces and to take control over key land such as ridges. Destroying your enemy's base will take tenacity



Levels will be drawn from a contiguous world map. Players will even be able to revisit villages they built earlier in the campaign

for-all mêlées that pass for strategy.

Life-giving Liquid

More strategic issues arise from the second goal of bringing life to the game.

"Everything we do is to create a realtime strategy set in a believable world," says Del Castillo. "We know that that's impossible, but it's in striving towards that impossibility that we'll have the chance to achieve something great."

The immediate beneficiary will be the graphics. The game looks great, with birds soaring across the skies, clouds and rocky hillsides thanks to a strong proprietary 3D engine. But these trappings are for much more than decoration. For example, in most games trees act as walls. In *Battle Realms*, though, some units can pass through woods, affording cover or an advantageous sniping position. Move too fast and you'll disturb roosting birds – giving away your position to a watchful enemy. Shadows cast by the clouds give clues to the weather, which can quickly change from sunshine to a downpour, slowing down troop movement while refilling your reservoirs with precious supplies of water. The 3D hills and valleys afford true line of sight, making high ground important in your tactics. Fire looks fantastic, but can also end up setting your buildings alight. Water from that cascading waterfall can douse the flames. The rocky hillsides offer boulders that can be fired as projectile weapons or even rolled into enemy bases.

It works the other way around, too, with the emphasis on the finer side of strategy affording more room to the artists. With fewer units, there's more opportunity to develop the animation of particular soldiers. Where normal RTS battles feature grunts hacking at each other like myopic, angry tennis players, in *Battle Realms* they twirl and stab as if inspired by all those kung fu movies. Idle units fiddle with their weapons, practice duelling or chat. Again, this feeds back into the game – swordsmen get a bonus after a training session, while peasant farmers will see their productivity rise after swapping gossip with a neighbour.

"I frustrate the hell out of the artists because I am constantly saying to them I don't want 'good enough'," says Del Castillo. "I want excellence. I want every little thing in our game to make people go 'Wow, wow, wow.'"

Even the most hardened strategy gamers seldom express excitement at the



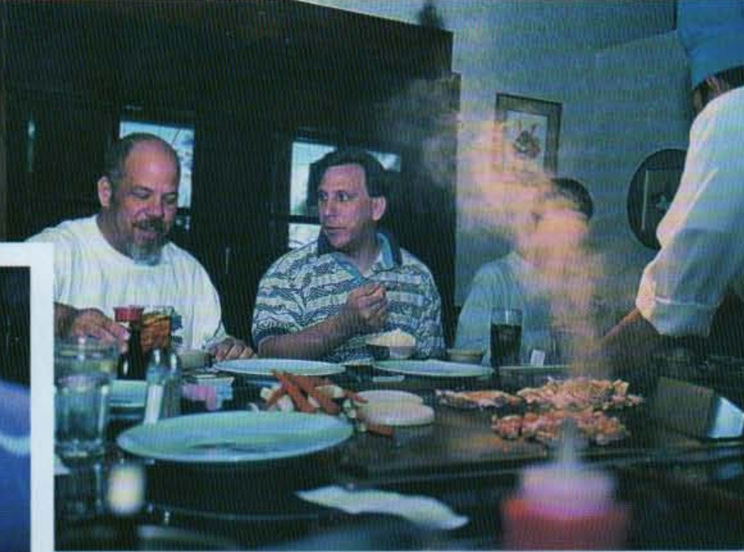
There are four main resouces the player has to manage in order to offer the best chance of success in the game: water, rice, horses and peasants

"I frustrate the hell out of the artists, because I don't want good enough, I want excellence. I want everything in our game to make people go 'Wow, wow, wow'"

Photography: Elena Dorfman







The Liquid lifestyle is enhanced by offices 20 minutes out of LA in a low crime suburb and the fact employees share in 50 per cent of the company's profits



The move away from massive armies has afforded the Liquid art team more time to work on its designs and animations

economic model that underpins games, and so determines the recruitment of armies and the expansion and fortification of bases. Yet Liquid's plans deserve a 'gosh' at the least, since again the outfit is doing it differently.

A Liquid market

All units in *Battle Realms* begin life as simple peasants who are trained to become warriors, cavalry, magicians or farmers. That already happens in the likes of *Age of Empires*, but crucially the peasant birth rate in the game will be moderated by a mathematical function rather than by building more peasants' huts. And just as in real life, the birth rate will be logarithmic. As a village gets more densely populated, the birth rate will decline. Again, this realistic yet simple idea has a big impact. The starting phase will be less boring, since villages will grow rapidly, and if you take a beating you'll be able to regain strength fairly rapidly. But winners will face the issue of an eventual decline in the birth rate. If you've conquered half the map with a big army but you've trained nearly all your populace to be fighters rather than farmers, you may find a shortage of resources abruptly halts your progress.

Life's little details

If it's pertinent to dwell on the structural changes that promise to make *Battle Realms* something different, the player is most likely be more immediately gobsmacked by the rich milieu that Liquid is conjuring up. Thanks to the emphasis on detail, each of the four competing clans in *Battle Realms* is likely to offer a well-realised civilisation. The differences are less apparent in the first two clans the player can control: Dragon and Serpent. The former is a very moral race, the latter strong and prone to cruelty. But overall the unit types are similar.

The other two clans are more outlandish. The Lotus clan is sinister and magical, with body types warped by forbidden magic. "They go through a grotesque middle level of unit which consumes them, transforming them into guys who vomit up black masses of magic or spill over with black magical maggots," explains Del Castillo. Eventually the Egyptian-like race gains control over the force, becoming powerful warlocks. In sharp contrast, the Wolf clan is a primal, feral race that has broken free from the Lotus clan. They're strong and brutish, with squat endomorphic bodies that give them awesome strength, enabling them to carry siege weapons on their backs and punch people out cold. They ride wolves instead of horses, and the horse resources are actually used by the clan to feed breeding wolves.

Exact details of the different clans units are yet to be finalised, but Del Castillo expects the battle plans and tactics to vary more than the basic unit types. All the clans are likely to have variants of Eastern archers, swordsmen and cavalry plus, of course, the hardy peasant. Incidentally, the latter will be much stronger than in *Warcraft* or *Age of Empires*, and will mount a reasonable defence of his village.

It is the hero who will add real character to each clan though. Full details have yet to be revealed, but it has already



The peasant birth rate will be logarithmic, and so as a village becomes more densely populated it will decline. Building new huts alone won't see it recover



Nearly everything in *Battle Realms* will have a sound effect, from crickets at dusk to the cranking of a ballistic siege weapon. Music will be dynamic

been decided the system will be based around Zen masters. These masters are unique characters with special abilities. Some are individually good fighters or improve the performance of groups of units, others are spies or boost the economy. You'll also have the opportunity to recruit monks or ninjas to your side, depending on your style of play. The two sides are locked in their own timeless feud representing the struggle of Yin and Yang.

A different kind of magic will also set each clan apart. Again, much remains to be decided, but there are already units throwing cards or performing Chinese paper magic. The attention to detail means you can expect more than just a flash of smoke from your wizards.

"One of my favourite spells is used by one of the heroes who is always drunk," says Del Castillo. "He has a huge distillery that he carries on his back, which he drinks sake from all day. His first-level attack is to blow a flame, his second level of attack is that he blows a fireball, and for his third level of attack he releases 'the Phoenix from within'."

Cool and refreshing Liquid

Battle Realms is halfway through production – at exactly the point where initial results and enthusiasm can make both journalists and developers overly optimistic. Nonetheless, after the uninspiring slog through what E3 had to offer, *Battle Realms* shines like the great hope for a moribund genre, where pretty graphics in the likes of *Ground Control* are no disguise for gameplay going nowhere. It takes a lot to impress **Edge**, but perhaps even more will be required to make Del Castillo happy.

"The best indication of success is what happened to me one time with *Command & Conquer*," he remembers. "I walked into a store and somebody was raving to his friend about *C&C* and telling him he had to buy it. That's real success. That meant more to me than all the sales.

"When money is the motivator you develop soulless products. Build what you love and the detail in the product naturally emerges, and when that happens the consumer rewards you with more riches than you could ever imagine. And not just on the fiscal side but with respect and the kind of grandeur that comes with awe for the things that you do. That doesn't come when you're trying to make something like *Deer Hunter*."

Life in Liquid

Not many developers' front doors lead into a mock-up of a submarine with water bubbling through the portholes. And not many developers offer a pool containing a 50 per cent share in all company profits to their staff. But Ed Del Castillo and Mike Grayford are doing things differently at their Thousand Oaks-based studio, founded in April 1999.

Until Liquid signed a four-product deal with Crave Entertainment, Del Castillo was juggling debts spread over half a dozen credit cards to keep the company afloat. But neither partner wanted to make a deal for merely financial reasons.

"The first rule at Liquid is to give the joy of gaming to as many people as humanly possible and to worry about the money second," says Del Castillo. "My parents taught me that if you really love what you do, you'll never have to worry about money."

Twenty minutes on the 101 from Los Angeles, Liquid's location seems almost wilderness, with window views not of the usual glass-eyed buildings of a Californian business park but of mountains and a suburb with the lowest crime rate in the state. Del Castillo wants to integrate Liquid into that local community, and to make Liquid a supreme working place.

"We want a company that values the people who generate the value," he says. "It can't be fair any other way. I'm not the only one busting my gut."










As well as the straightforward warring, *Battle Realms* will feature magic and heroes of the Zen Master persuasion



Rob Sandberg demonstrates the team's real dedication to Liquid

Ed's world

The games industry has got it all wrong, says Del Castillo when **Edge** mentions its disappointment with the recent E3 show. Del Castillo says too many non-games people are making decisions based on the fear of losing their jobs. He thinks this mentality is quashing creativity and contributing to a reduction in interest in videogames.

"At the high end, the business is all about mathematics and spreadsheets," he notes. "Earnings per share, return on investment and the salaries of the different people. But at the lowest development level it's completely organic – it's my dog died, my grandma is sick, I ate something that didn't sit at all well with me today.

"The bigger companies cram that science as far down the pipe as they can, when what they should be doing is trying to absorb the organic upwards. They should try to embrace the development process.

"Every largely traded company is trying to make the best short-term decision to maximise their quarterly revenue. What they end up doing is burning up licences and brands and titles that could have generated money well into the future.

"I feel I'm too passionate sometimes, to the point where I say things I shouldn't. But the games business impassioned me. It imbued me with thoughts and desires I had never had. To see that world withering – it hurts me."

SevenBlades

Konami has underlined its commitment to lending *Seven Blades* a cinematic feel by recruiting director Kaizo Hayashi as supervisor, but how is the relationship working out?

Format: **PlayStation 2**

Publisher: **Konami**

Developer: **In-house (KCEJE)**

Release: **End of 2000 (Japan)**

Origin: **Japan**



Like the protagonist in Kaizo Hayashi's 'Legend of Zipang', players will have to choose the weaponry appropriate to particular opponents. Also like the movie, players will be faced with waves of oncoming attackers, but a 'lock-on' system will target them sequentially as their colleagues are chopped down

Cinematic inspiration has been responsible for a significant number of low points in videogame history, from diabolical interactive movies to uninspired licences. Every so often, though, titles such as *Metal Gear Solid* and *GoldenEye* manage to capture that movie feel, sparking the imaginations of gamers and spurring other developers to look to film for stimulation.

KCEJ East appears to have gone one step further than other developers with *Seven Blades*. The title is a heady mix of 18th Century Japanese history and sci-fi, and is based on 'Jipang' (released in the west as 'The Legend of Zipang') – a film directed by **Kaizo Hayashi**. It would appear that Konami liked the director so much they hired him.

Hayashi-san – whose other movie releases include 'Cat's Eye', 'The Trap', and 'Stairway To The Distant Past' – is the direction supervisor on a team of around 20 people working on the title, which started development roughly two years ago. **Atsushi Horigami**, the producer of *Reiselied* as well as *Seven Blades*, stresses the advantages that the director's experience in the film industry has brought to the project: "Hayashi-san's work on this project is very important as he brought an entire vision, an entire world to the game. If you consider a title like *Tomb Raider*, there is almost no story to speak of."

But it would appear that his background in film has proved a bit of a double-edged sword in terms of creativity, as Hayashi-san himself points

"Hayashi-san's work on this project… brought an entire vision, an entire world to the game. If you consider a title like *Tomb Raider*, there is almost no story to speak of"



Gokurakumaru and love interest Yuri reach the island of Dejima for different reasons, but have a common goal. PlayStation2 technology allows a range of visual effects, and a huge number of characters onscreen at one time – including several supporting characters to fight independently in aid of the couple





Yuri's superior agility allows her to traverse rooftops and pick off enemies from above with one of the eight weapons available to her. There are times when her opponents may get the same idea

out: "On a movie you have to deal with human relationships, but with polygons they do exactly what you want them to do. However, because it is a videogame, you have to consider the gameplay first, so I have not been able to include all of the features that I would have liked."

Nonetheless, the director is keen to emphasise that his background does lend *Seven Blades* a little something extra over similar titles: "I would stress that it is not simply an action game. The story is an important part of the game. It should really be viewed as a movie with action elements."

His movie has certainly provided Konami with a distinctive premise on which to base the title. "The game takes place during a famous period in Japanese history. The Japanese authorities created a special area to gather western foreigners on an island called Dejima, but a religious group arrives on the island wishing to make it a separate state from Japan," relates Hayashi-san. "The Japanese send many ninjas to investigate but none of them came back." Which is where the two lead characters come into proceedings. Despite the historical setting the game also incorporates something of a sci-fi bent as the tale unfolds. "As the heroes get more deeply involved in the island mystery they will face a very hi-tech environment."

The two lead protagonists will each have very different gameplay and controls, project director **Shinsuke Mukai** explains: "Gokurakumaru, the man, is strong and is focused on close combat with large blades. Yuri, the girl, is more vulnerable, but is more agile and has access to guns." Indeed, Gokurakumaru has access to a total of – the eponymous – seven blades, which is again a result of Hayashi-san's fertile imagination. "Like a golfer, he will have seven katanas or blades available, that are selected according to the situation," he outlines. "As a film director, I found the idea of a samurai equipped with blades in the same way a golfer is with his clubs very interesting."

Yuri also has access to multiple weapons and, according to Mukai-san, this is an important aspect of the game: "All the blades and guns have been designed to suit a particular situation or enemy. Most of the blades are based on real weapons from Japanese history but some are totally original.

"We tried to introduce interesting gameplay and fun with some of them. As for Yuri, she will have about eight weapons and many are original, like the machine-gun. Of course, the player will have to find them and a few have limited ammo so if the player runs out, they will have to throw the weapon away. Secret weapons are also present."

"On a movie you have to deal with human relationships, but polygons do exactly what you want. However, as it is a videogame, you have to consider the gameplay first"

The game is structured around a series of missions, or scenarios, including saving a woman in a limited time and negotiating a long street lined with rooftop snipers. A cast of supporting characters will provide the two protagonists with assistance at various key points throughout the game. According to Mukai-san, controls will be simple, with a lock-on targeting system in the style of *Zelda: Ocarina of Time*, and several different camera views,





Kaizo Hayashi (left), Shinsuke Mukai (above left) and Atsushi Horigami (above right) have assembled a team of around 20 people from different parts of Konami specifically for the title







The paths of the two heroes will meet at several points in the game, but some events will only make sense when the game is completed with both

including both first and thirdperson. Power-ups will be in the form of items of food, and thanks to a 'cooking' system they can be combined for greater effect.

In developing the game for the PlayStation2, the team was also inspired by the movie, albeit indirectly. Horigami-san explains: "The number of polygons was decisive. There is a crucial scene in the movie in which Gokurakumaru has to cross a very long bridge, but a huge

"There is a crucial scene in the movie where the hero has to cross a long bridge, but a huge number of enemies are coming from the other side… I wanted to keep the spirit"

number of enemies are coming from the other side. The hero kills 100 enemies in this scene in just one cut. When he arrives on the other side of the bridge, he says, 'I'm tired'. Gokurakumaru is such a strong character and in *Seven Blades* I wanted to keep the same spirit.

"Actually, when we started to think about this project, we thought it would be a PlayStation1 title. But with such limited hardware, we would have only been able to display three enemies at the same time. Imagine enemies appearing one by one with all the awful pop-up. No, we needed more powerful machines to work with.



Sci-fi elements become more pronounced as the game progresses, until the arrival of the bad guys by flying saucer presents some interesting scenery

"When Dreamcast came out, we thought it was still difficult. So we chose PlayStation2. On Dreamcast, we would have been able to make something good but we would have had to sacrifice some features like the background: there would have been the bridge, a river and then darkness.

"On PlayStation2, we still cannot display 100 enemies at a time, only 20 at the moment, but we are able to include a better-looking background. Although the bridge was very cool in a movie, it wasn't really very much fun to play, so we changed the setting to a town. And we are quite proud of the result: the hero is running through the town while 20 ninjas are attacking."

Horigami-san is optimistic about the game's chances of success outside his country. "I hope people outside Japan will like it even if there are a few specific Japanese cultural points," he says. "We are developing this game carefully so it can have a large audience even outside Japan." As for Hayashi-san, he may not be returning to the world of film straight away: "Making a videogame is a very interesting experience for me," he says. "There are a couple of projects that I would like to look at, as long as Konami don't get rid of me first." E



Format: **PlayStation2**

Publisher: **Konami**

Developer: **KCEJ West**

Release: **Autumn 2001 (Japan)**

Origin: **Japan**

MetalGearSolid2

It took a mere nine-minute trailer at E3 in LA to alter every attendee's perception of the action videogame. Edge stepped behind Konami's giant video wall to quiz the geniuses behind the PlayStation2 game the world is waiting for


Hideo Kojima


Yoji Shinkawa

Every once in a while a game comes to light that dwarfs its contemporaries on every conceivable level; a game capable of redefining the playing field with such vigour that many of those who witness it are left in temporary state of confusion, rapidly running out of superlatives to describe what they have just seen. *Super Mario 64* was such a videogame. And so, it seems, is *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty*.

That *MGS2* was going to be good was never in question. But that it would be this good was unforeseeable. Months before E3, **Edge** had heard from sources that the game was coming along in fabulous form, making every other PS2 title look woefully inadequate, Square's *The Bouncer* included. Nines times out of ten such claims prove to be little more than PR froth, and a string of disappointing episodes have left **Edge** wisely wary. No such disillusionment this time, however. During the show's three days, a nine-minute video of *MGS2* ran on the hour, every hour, dazzling onlookers every time. Everyone your correspondent talked to mentioned the same symptoms – hairs raising on the back of the neck and goose pimples, with one individual going as far as welling up during the closing stages of the footage.



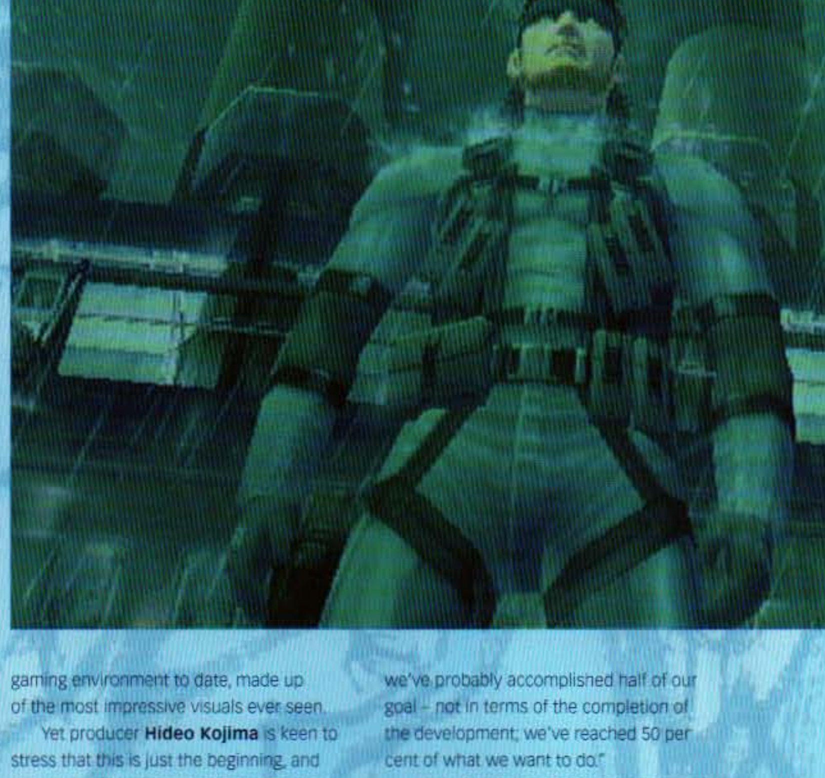








The action takes place on a tanker and in New York (specifically Manhattan). Expect Revolver Ocelot, Otokon and Liquid Snake to return in an experience that should be slightly longer than *MGS*



While **Edge** is the first to admit the sequence has been expertly edited to resemble a Hollywood actioner (just as the initial *Metal Gear Solid* trailers were back in 1997), with few true in-game moments (though everything uses the in-game engine), the result is nevertheless utterly stunning. It offers the most detailed gaming environment to date, made up of the most impressive visuals ever seen.

Yet producer **Hideo Kojima** is keen to stress that this is just the beginning, and the game will look better still by the time it's released next year. Ask him about the early development stages and he'll admit to being disappointed initially, dreading the journeys to work as the team (also behind the PlayStation version of *MGS*) appeared unable to achieve what he had originally expected. Developing on PS2 has been fraught with problems, though his programmers enjoyed coming up with new ways of overcoming obstacles and creating their own tools (middleware support took too long to arrive).

"When we found out what we could do with PlayStation2 we set a goal for ourselves," says Kojima-san. "For now we've probably accomplished half of our goal – not in terms of the completion of the development; we've reached 50 per cent of what we want to do."

And what the team has accomplished so far is staggering. Marvel at the way the torrential rain drops splash off the characters' clothes as they stand on the deck of an intricately modelled tanker (incidentally, both the rain and Snake's progress are affected by wind speed and direction), the superb lighting techniques and the astounding quality of the textures throughout the environment – particularly on clothes. Everything appears to be modelled realistically, with glass and bottles shattering in an extremely convincing manner (one of the finer moments includes a shootout in the tanker's storage room, where Snake takes

"FOR NOW WE'VE PROBABLY ACCOMPLISHED HALF OF OUR GOAL – NOT IN TERMS OF THE COMPLETION OF THE DEVELOPMENT; WE'VE REACHED 50 PER CENT OF WHAT WE WANT TO DO"



The Dolby Digital musical score alters to suit the on-screen action









cover behind a shelf unit as his enemy shoots most of the contents off the shelves above him), and the apparent ability to interact with your surroundings as you would in real life (shooting out lights, throwing a bullet casing to attract a guard's attention, or using the steam in pipes to scald enemies, for instance).

What's also impressive is Solid Snake's range of facial expressions, an aspect Kojima-san claims to have caused the most headaches. "In the demo it's pretty easy because you can have close-ups and you can just draw the face that way," he says, "but [the hardest aspect] is trying to convey the emotions of the character – particularly the facial expressions, but also his actions – in-game, because if you do too much it could interfere with the action elements of the gameplay and we don't want to do that. But at the same time we want to make sure that the player knows how Snake feels. Even in the video when the camera is pulling away from the characters we're actually doing stuff to











The use of lighting is some of the best Edge has seen (above). While you're able to shoot in firstperson mode (for better accuracy), you're not allowed to move in that view (main). Enemy squads adopt genuine strategic deployment techniques

Solid Snake's face. You just might not have noticed it every single time."

What **Edge** has noticed is Snake's improved repertoire. He can now look around corners, hang off ledges to hide, roll forward, somersault, drag unconscious guards out of sight, hide in lockers, use a tranquilizer gun, and plenty of revolutionary Dual Shock2-related things that the team is not ready to divulge. "What we can talk about," offers Kojima-san, "is the use of the analogue buttons. For example, if you normally press up when you're in a crouching position, you'll crawl, but if you press up quickly, you'll crawl very quickly. However, if you do that you'll be making noise. The same if you draw your gun quickly – things like that."

Also new is the way guards hunt you down as a team rather than as individuals and boast better levels of perception, such as being able to spot Snake's shadow. "You have a captain, a co-captain and two other guys cooperating," Kojima-san reveals, "and they have different roles, they have different weapons and they all work as a team to get Snake." Furthermore, enemies react to the weapon that you are carrying. "For example, if you have your handgun and you run out of bullets, they'll know you don't have bullets any more and they'll come at you, but then you suddenly switch to your Stinger missiles and they'll go, 'Oh my God', and run away to hide behind walls," explains Kojima-san. "And if not all the enemies have a shield, the captain will instruct the guy with the shield to go to the front. Also, once Snake has been discovered, everyone in the area knows there's an intruder so then they'll be searching around in a different way. We're spending one third of the Emotion Engine just on the AI."

In fact, even with a console of PS2's calibre, balancing the power at the team's disposal has become a key aspect of the development. "It's a battle between the different parts of the game," says Kojima-san. "How much of the calculating power do you want to use on the effects or in the motion or the models – where do you want to allocate them power?"

But you'd expect the PlayStation2's alleged muscle to make life a little easier, surely? "Nothing has really become easy with PS2," counters Kojima-san. "It's probably become harder because there are so many things that you can and have to do. People can spend too much time working on the graphics and then tend to forget that they should spend enough time on the gameplay.

"For example, what you see in the video is a tanker and normally in a game if there are rooms that you don't have to visit, then you don't have to create those rooms. But when the game and the graphics and everything else becomes so realistic you have to create these rooms, you just can't leave these places empty. So you end up creating an engine room which you really don't have to visit, but it's there. When you have Solid Snake being able to visit a room that he really doesn't have to it can detract from the original game and can lead to the collapse

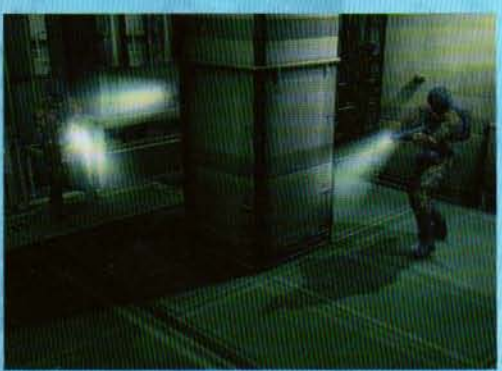


Kojima-san and his team started using Lego to plot the the level design, but the multi-storey nature of the stages soon made them abandon the idea in favour of CG maps on KCEJW's computers








of the whole concept or even all the rules and the system."

So presumably the challenge is to combine the various components?

"It's an action game, it's got to play well, it's got to feel right," he says. "I draw the line when I start adding too many things and if the CPU power doesn't enable you to control Snake right or if the music and sound interferes with his motion. That's when I stop adding detail. For example, perhaps if on the deck I want a lot of rain and huge waves splashing *and* Snake, I might not have any enemy soldiers there. But if I want Snake versus many soldiers, I'll probably stop the rain or the waves – you know, I make trade-offs within the game to maintain the right level of gameplay throughout."

The change of hardware has also affected the game's characters, particularly Metal Gear Ray – the latest incarnation of the super weapon central to the plot of *MGS*. Designed to combat the Metal Gear clones that appeared around the world after the schematics of the original were sold on the black market at the end of the PlayStation1 game, Metal Gear Ray is a formidable proposition and looks striking. "With the power of PlayStation2 you can add more detail, more curves and stuff to Metal Gear [Ray] itself," proclaims the producer. "Not only visual stuff but also how it moves and how it functions – we added much more detail, which also adds to the cinematic feel.

"Function-wise, Metal Gear [Ray] can go underwater. It's amphibious this time and for it to be able to swim it's got to have the proper shape," adds **Yoji Shinkawa**, responsible for character and mechanical design as well as overall graphics supervision. "And it's got to move properly to actually swim around, so I've worked on that and I guess with the increased powers of the machine it

GUARDS HUNT YOU DOWN AS A TEAM RATHER THAN AS INDIVIDUALS AND BOAST BETTER LEVELS OF PERCEPTION, SUCH AS BEING ABLE TO SPOT SNAKE'S SHADOW

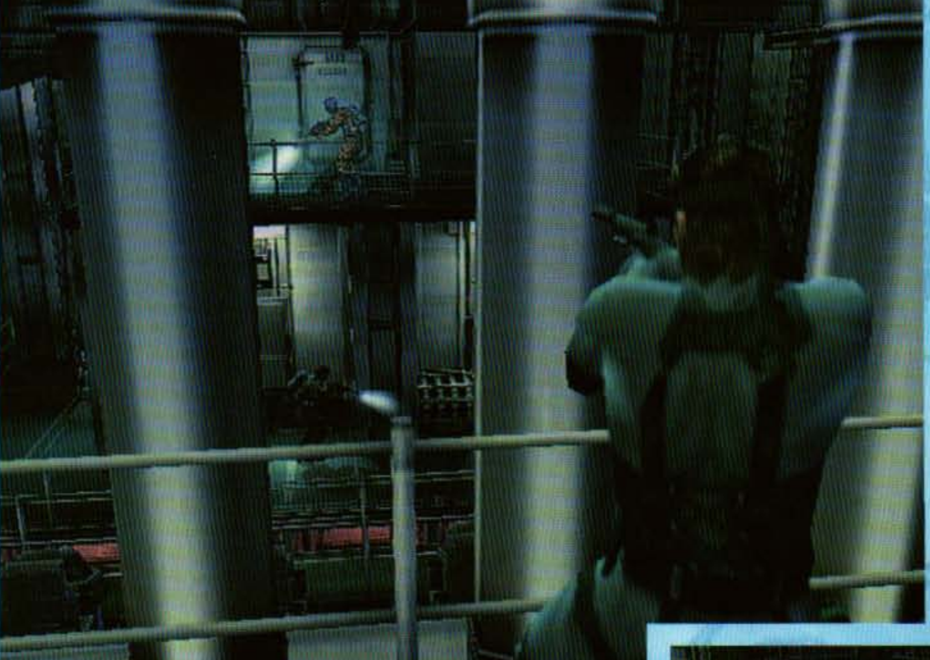
















The tranquilizer gun (above) has a more immediate effect if you target an enemy's head rather than his limbs. Although very difficult, it is possible to finish *MGS2* without having to kill any of your adversaries



Again, there's a lot of emphasis on cinematics, though expect the switching between cameras to be performed in a more detailed, more refined manner

doesn't move like a robot. It moves like an organism, like a living thing – it sort of evolved from a dinosaur to a much bigger Godzilla-like monster."

While Shinkawa-san makes this sound an easy process, he'll be the first to tell you numerous Ray versions were scrapped before he settled on the current model. "And I'm sure there are many more characters that he scraps that I never see," Kojima-san says, laughing. "There was this character called El Mariachi that we wanted to include [in *MGS*]. He knew a lot about mercenaries and you could contact him through the Codec. He'd give you information about a particular mercenary, but only after he sang a song and you'd have to sit through the entire song before he'd give the information – he didn't make it into the game."

Inevitably, many ideas will fail to make it into *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty*. One that should be included is a clever method of self-classification. By analysing a set of specific actions early on in the game the age group, sex and hobbies of players are determined and the game's subsequent level of violence and amount of blood are then adjusted to suit. It's just one of many innovations that the team is keen to implement.

Though more than a year away, the end result promises to be more momentous than even the original was. "We know how much everyone out there expects from us and that's put a lot of pressure on us," admits Kojima. "But at the same time we would like to come up with something that is great, and to do that first of all we know that there are so many things that we can do and that we want to do, and so what we are doing now is to prioritise what we should do.

"All we've completed so far is the system, the engine. From here on we have to come up with more characters and build all the stages to coincide with the entire game, the storyline. But there's still so much more to do."

There is absolutely no doubt that it will be worth the wait. 





Weather conditions are the most convincing ever realised (above)

Edge@E3 2000


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2600
imagine
PlayStation2
Dreamcast

Over the next 30 pages **Edge** reflects on the highlight of the videogaming calendar, reporting on the hottest games in Los Angeles, and using the opportunity to catch up with some of the industry's movers and shakers. (PlayStation2 owners, look away now...)



PC
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Nintendo 64
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Was it the greatest show on earth, as was expected? Or was it really what most cynical software publishers refer to it as: a necessary evil, a multinational circus you attend because not spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on a lavish stand and a stack of local LA models for furnishing purposes would be tantamount to admitting that you're not a serious player in the game?

Despite the promise held by a smattering of titles that occasionally proved difficult to wheedle out, E3 2000 will not be remembered as a vintage affair. Microsoft may have been eminently capable of attracting round-the-stand queues for its X-Box technology demos on the main floor, but the absence of something like *GT2000* running on the most capable piece of gaming hardware in existence ensured that few attendees came away with a crystal-clear view on Bill Gates' intent.

Sony clearly *did* have *GT2000*, but it also had a pile of PS2 games whose appearance did the company more harm than good. Without Konami's *Metal Gear Solid 2*, this may well have been a disastrous E3 for the company.

With Nintendo pitching in with a small number of N64 titles, and the PC sector in its usual jumbled state, it was left to Sega to steal the show for the second year in succession.

In 12 months' time, with the first wave of X-Box software nearing completion, Dreamcast enjoying established online gaming, and second- or third-generation PlayStation2 software on the table, E3 2001 seems destined to be a far more thrilling occasion.

For the time being, enjoy **Edge**'s trawl through this year's industry jamboree. There was an awful lot of clutter to pick through, but that simply makes the highlights even more notable.

PlayStation2



Despite being in possession of what many believe to be the definitive next-generation console, Sony had a quiet E3, with few titles bar *Metal Gear Solid 2* that really caught the eye

The majority of PlayStation2 titles on offer at E3 were so far off the mark Sony originally claimed its 128bit machine capable of that you could forgive those beginning to doubt the PS2's true computing muscle. While *Metal Gear Solid 2* soon had most of them quivering in their boots, the appearance of Hideo Kojima's next-gen Snake episode only served to demonstrate the gap that nearly everyone else has to make up.

Everywhere you turned there would be a developer complaining of the difficulties involved in programming Sony's new hardware. Oddworld Inhabitants, more vocal than most, bitterly criticised the machine's anti-aliasing and mip-mapping capability. It went as far as to claim it regarded the problem hardware related, and therefore not the developer's responsibility to come up with a solution.

A generous amount of floor space on the Sony stand itself was devoted to the new machine's DVD playback facility, with the majority of the remaining area concentrating on the more interactive form of the entertainment the PlayStation2 can deliver. Rolling demos of the recently announced SCEE-developed PS2 games proved reasonably popular (see News), though the few crowds that formed tended to prefer the playable demos of current Japanese releases and forthcoming software such as Capcom's *Onimusha* (which featured characters that failed to integrate convincingly with the background, and dubious 3D fighting).

Overall, a distinct lack of quality software was evident across the show. Sony may have held its head high at post-show industry bashes, confident of the impending success for its forthcoming US and Euro launches, but **Edge** no longer shares any of that assurance. As good as *Metal Gear Solid 2* may prove, one game alone doesn't guarantee success for a platform. Just ask Nintendo, whose N64 console provides access to the world's top three videogames of all time (see **E**80).

TimeSplitters

Former *GoldenEye* team members Free Radical Design join the PS2 development big league with a refined firstperson shooting enterprise with its sights very much set on past experience



One of the few impressive PS2 titles at E3, *TimeSplitters* is shaping up rather smoothly. The emphasis is very much on recreating the atmosphere of the *Doom* era – a time when more than a maximum of three enemies would be encountered at once. The work-in-progress demo **Edge** played at E3 was impressive, with a constant refresh rate of 60fps complementing some highly detailed textures and particularly solid looking environments. Control uses the Dual Shock2's two analogue sticks – mirroring the dual-joypad *GoldenEye* control favoured by seasoned players – and level design appears intelligently thought out. You can also build your own levels using an in-built editor which is simplicity itself, enabling you to build complex multi-level arenas with surprising ease. Expect to see this on the shelves come the October 26 European PS2 launch.

- Developer: **Free Radical Design**
- Publisher: **Eidos**











In a dark secret room at E3 Edge had a fourplayer bash on FRD's tempting *TimeSplitters*. While so far little of the structure and gameplay elements has been revealed, the only criticism at this stage would be that some of the weapons feel a little dated





OddWorld:Munch'sOddysee

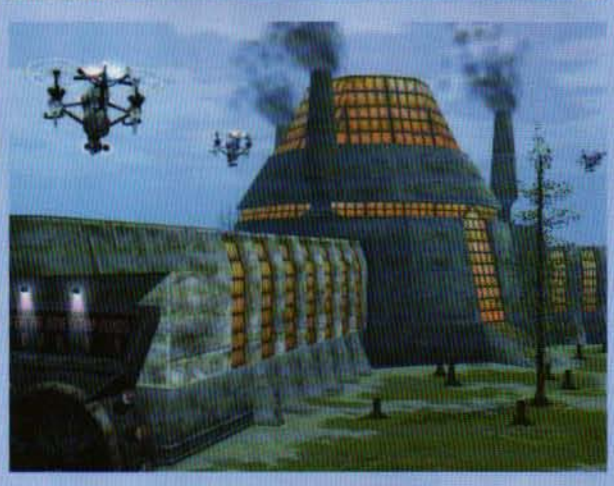
Oddworld Inhabitants returns with a 128bit-powered second sequel to one of the most popular franchises to have graced the PlayStation to date

Another inspiring PS2 forthcoming release currently set for launch, this time from platforming adventure supremo Oddworld Inhabitants. The action has entered the 3D realm, but rather than demonstrate all of the usual problems associated with such a move the developer has taken a fresh approach by offering a dynamic camera system that ensures optimal viewing and framing positions at all times. Further promising touches include a control system that combats what the developer terms the "virtual idiot phenomenon" – irritating aspects such as characters getting stuck in walls and having to demonstrate pinpoint accuracy when activating switches. In *Munch's Oddysee*, your character automatically deflects from any wall you might crush your polygonal nose on and switches have a generous trigger area in order to promote smooth navigation. Throw in innovative power-ups and weapons, RTS elements, an engrossing narrative, 60fps and pick-up-and-play controls, and *Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee* looks like becoming an enticing proposition.

- Developer: **Oddworld Inhabitants**
- Publisher: **Infogrames**













***Munch's Oddysee* makes particularly good use of lighting. For the developer, gameplay is king: for instance, everything in the world is non-lethal until you can actually see it – by turning a corner, for example. This is just one of many touches**

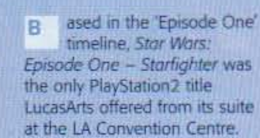
StarWars:EpisodeOneStarfighter

LucasArts isn't being shy about exploiting its licence-to-end-all-licences, and PS2 owners will soon be able to feel The Force in this space shooter

These official shots from LucasArts are somewhat misleading, as in practice the game does not offer such clean polygon edges. Many craft from the movie will appear in the final game, plus many 'fictional' ones, too







Based in the 'Episode One' timeline, *Star Wars: Episode One – Starfighter* was the only PlayStation2 title LucasArts offered from its suite at the LA Convention Centre.

The development team is striving to recreate elements that made *Shadows Of The Empire* a hit on the N64, with close-combat dogfights forming the lion's share of the action.

Combat takes place on the surface and in orbit of several planets, but the former levels appear more impressive at this point, with ground detail created procedurally thanks to some impressive use of the PS2's vector units (try heading into orbit, then turning around to survey the planet surface). With polish, one to watch.

- Developer: **In-house**
- Publisher: **LucasArts**







MaddenNFL2001

American football titles are, predictably, big Stateside, and EA is wasting no time in giving the game an 128bit makeover for the US PS2 launch



Possibly the most graphically impressive of the many EA franchises undergoing a 128bit transformation, *Madden NFL 2001* may take the American football videogame to new heights should its playability match the aesthetics. Details such as reflective players' helmets, facial animation (including eye movement for ball/player tracking) and the quality of textures ensures that – visually at least – things currently look very promising. Expect an October 26 release (US).

- Developer: **In-house**
- Publisher: **EA Sports**





ICO

Another surprise SCEI development to add to the growing 'to be released' PS2 library, *ICO* would seem to offer slightly more than the usual action-RPG fare

Appearing in playable form on the Sony stand, *ICO* is an action RPG set in a fantastical three-dimensional world filled with platform-heavy castles, puzzling dungeons and less confined environments such as vast fields. Control-wise, the young hero on a mission to save a beautiful princess is easily manageable, as is the camera system. The 3D fighting sequences flow with little to no problems. The graphical level is adequate, though lighting and animation are easily above average. Innovation comes mainly in the forms of opponents and collapsible environments, though much was left unveiled.

■ Developer: **In-house**
■ Publisher: **SCEI**





GunSlinger

Just as the Western has fallen out of favour with film makers in recent years, so too has it with game designers. This title intends to redress the balance

Coming from the team behind *Drakan*, this was one of the surprise PS2 titles at the show. A thirdperson action-RPG, the game offers many staple components from the Wild West movie genre, such as gunfights, stagecoach hijacks, jail breaks, gambling on card games, and horse riding.

The game's still 12 months from completion – and didn't it show at E3, with a rough frame rate and a number of locations distinctly lacking in detail.

But the central premise is excellent (you can choose to be either a clean-living good guy or a grizzled outlaw), and the developer promises to be taking the genre seriously.

■ Developer: **Surreal Software**
■ Publisher: **Activision**





TheWorldIsNotEnough

One of the disappointments of the show was seeing *The World Is Not Enough* in action. Looking decidedly like an average firstperson PC shooter with significant frame rate problems, nothing in the footage demonstrated how EA's game is likely to move the genre forward (as the publisher had originally promised), lacking, as it seemingly is, in any revolutionary touches. EA is currently targetting the PS2 October 26 launch. There's still time to improve...

■ Developer: **EA Games**
■ Publisher: **In-house**




GranTurismo2000

The king of all racing games appeared at E3 with some more selectable cars and a couple of new versions of circuits, but overall the title looks the same as its last outing



Kazunori Yamauchi arrived at E3 with a new demo incorporating more selectable cars (Lotus Elise and Lancia Stratos, for instance) and an overcast version of the Seattle track and the Laguna Seca circuit. Although Sony was unable to provide screenshots of these, the graphics haven't changed since **Edge** last saw the game as Yamauchi and his team have concentrated on finishing the dynamics, which are wonderfully refined. Visual improvements will now follow, along with at least two new tracks (based in Monaco and Tokyo). The title has been rescheduled for a very late 2000 release.

- Developer: **SCEI**
- Publisher: **Polyphony Digital**

InternationalTrack&Field

Button-bashing bastion of the athletics videogame goes for graphical overhaul in its next-gen incarnation, with the developer opting to use motion-capture of pro competitors







Also out on Dreamcast (and possibly every other format under the rising sun), the latest *Track & Field* title hopes to hop on the Sydney Olympics bandwagon as a way to combat Konami's lack of an official licence (which belongs to ATD's promising interpretation of the events). Professional athletes have been motion-captured (a first for the series) with 500 of their actions making it into the final 12 or so events. The massive graphical overhaul coincides with the franchise's move away from its arcade roots towards reality-based action, although this probably won't render the game more playable.

- Developer: **In-house**
- Publisher: **Konami**





Smuggler'sRun

Looking a long way off what Konami has shown the PS2 can do, *Smuggler's Run* (formerly known as *Getaway*) at least promises polygonal-based action as you get involved in vehicular chases for suitcases full of contraband. One of the game's more interesting points is the ability to instruct your CPU comrades to deal with adversaries homing in on your ride, although the show demo concentrated on the multiplayer 'hold the briefcase' arena-type combat.

- Developer: **Rockstar Games**
- Publisher: **In-house**

At E3 with...



Bruno Bonnell
CEO, Infogrames

Edge: Is the apparent difficulty of programming PlayStation2 something that concerns you at all?
Bruno Bonnell: Well, you know, of course I'm going to be bad guy, right? I think that all these whinings about development cost and complexity of PlayStation2 are very classic stories I've heard. When the PlayStation came on-board it was, 'CDs are very complex to program', and before it was, 'We don't know how to write for 16bit', and then we had, 'We're used to tapes and now we have to work with ROMs and nobody can do that'.

In the transition period you have a natural selection of talent, that is what I feel. People have to change their habits – it [PS2] is a clear revolution in design. We have to include middleware as part of our lives and we won't reinvent the wheel every day. For the people who want to code bit by bit, too bad. They're in trouble. But for the people who accept the fact that gameplay, graphics and sound are going to be expressed wonderfully on PlayStation2, including the middleware mindset, there is a wonderful opportunity here.

People in game design have to reinvent themselves. X-Box and Dolphin are just evolution: PlayStation2 is a revolution. So now the big challenge for us is to design a game for this revolution. Who do we want to address? Massmarket. Is massmarket demanding the same thing as the niche market that we're used to? Probably not. Everybody has to define their own strategy and from there define the platform they want to support.

If you want to address the nichey teenagers, choose the right format – probably X-Box or even Dreamcast. If you want to address the massmarket people and you want to show them wonderful cars driving in wonderful landscapes, PlayStation2 is the one to go for. If you want to address the kids, you go with Nintendo. I believe that those systems are not competing – they all believe that the market share is limited when it hasn't even started yet. There is no loser in our business, as long as you have talent and you understand the revolution of this massmarket.

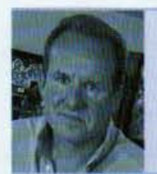
Edge: Expansion of the market accepted, you seem to feel that PS2 is the next-gen winner. Is that fair to say?
BB: There's a lot of space for X-Box – and probably another one as well. I wouldn't be surprised if we see another [hardware manufacturer], two years from now, announcing something. Why? Because interactive entertainment is clearly the form of entertainment of the future. And all the major groups in consumer electronics want to be part of it. I don't see any standardisation inside ten years and between now and then a lot of people are going to give it a try. The winners are software publishers and consumers.

To win the race we need to talk to each other. We need to understand each other. Consumers need to trust publishers' proposals and we need to listen to what we're told today: prices are too high, games are too complex, don't bullshit us with half-hour intros and weak design. They [consumers] are getting brighter, they're getting demanding.

Edge: Are consumers demanding broadband online gaming?
BB: In the same way that video killed the radio stars, broadband will kill the Internet games in the massmarket. The position of the broadband world is strong compared to the service-minded Internet world.

Don't get me wrong, Internet is interesting for services, interesting for leveraging our existing business. Downloading a new character is fun, uploading your score is fun, chatting is fun; but it's not playing. Playing is about being immersed in something. Infogrames is not going to take the Internet lightly, but we're going to take it as a service to our customers, to improve the quality of our service to them. On broadband we're going to be very aggressive into new product, new designs, but three years from now. We're working on it already, but it's three years from being commercial.

At E3 with...



Ian Livingstone
CEO, Eidos Interactive

Edge: The industry is a minor state of turmoil. How are things for you?
Ian Livingstone: This hasn't been a very good year because of the cyclical nature of the industry. This is not a great time for publishers in terms of revenues coming in. There's price pressure on PlayStation and PlayStation2's not out, and what with the price coming down on the hardware the whole demographic [of the consumer] changes. And they're not a sophisticated consumer; they don't read Web sites, they don't buy the magazines, they buy licensed games from us. Hence why we're doing games like *102 Dalmatians*, *Magical Racing*, *Chicken Run* and *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* These are going to be huge titles for us. We have to move with the cycle, but that doesn't mean we're not enthusiastic about the next generation.

Edge: There isn't much sign of that enthusiasm in your line-up at the show.
IL: Not on the floor – we have behind closed doors. Have you seen Free Radical's stuff, *TimeSplitters*? Absolutely amazing – it seems far better than anything else I've seen here. People are struggling with PlayStation2, to be honest – the development process is not as easy as people thought. I think games should be playable on the show floor, otherwise people will think, 'They're faking it, they can't do that'. I think we've got a great line-up on the floor for the market which exists for the next nine months or so.

Edge: Do you think the teething problems with developing PlayStation2 titles could dangerously extend the industry's cycle?
IL: It's a cruel world out there and not all the publishers that you see here will be at the next E3. Not all the *developers* you see here today will be at the next E3. As the whole industry matures there's consolidation and the best rise and the rest fall away. But the quality of the games is going to get better because technology demands that and consumers demand that.

Edge: Game development is taking longer than ever before. The financial risk involved in bringing new titles to market must be phemomenal.
IL: When you're establishing new intellectual properties, new styles of gaming, no one in their heart of hearts knows how that's going to be, whereas with a licensed product you know pretty much how many games you're going to sell. I think we've got such a games-concious environment at Eidos that we are able to select the right people and back them all the way. In terms of vision and gut feeling I think we're well set to know what to do and not to do.

Edge: On the hardware side of the business, who has impressed you?
IL: X-Box sounds like a perfect development environment, and you've got the power of Microsoft backing it. Nintendo have been in to see us and that [the Dolphin] is a very, very fine machine. We have some products that are definitely going to go on Dolphin. Nintendo are long in the tooth and very successful and I think they're going to have more open relationships in the future. They're going to have to embrace thirdparty publishers more, to allow them to make money for once.

Edge: Who are you betting on to win?
IL: [Laughs] This is a very, er... politically charged question. If I was a bookmaker I'd be putting very short odds on PlayStation2 to win out. And then the place bet would be X-Box and Dolphin. And longer odds on Dreamcast.

Edge: Is the potential shortfall in PlayStation2 shipments a short-term worry for you?
IL: I don't think many publishers in the west are going to be ready for a launch title anyway. We're not looking to launch anything until there's a larger installed base anyway. *TimeSplitters* will be one of our lead products. We have other games that Core have been developing, and they've had PlayStation2 development kits as long as anybody. And Crystal Dynamics as well. We have about seven titles – and they're all going to be absolute belters!

PlayStation

MedalOfHonorUnderground

Dreamworks follows up one of the hits of the last year with a sequel that incorporates helpful CPU characters, new locations and set-piece action sequences into a story of the French Resistance



Medal Of Honor was one of the best non-franchise games to appear on the PlayStation in the last 12 months. A sequel is now due to arrive exactly one year after the original and the game looks like it's going to survive serialisation honour intact, as *Underground* was one of only two PlayStation firstperson shooters (the other being *Alien Resurrection*) that caught and held the eye.

Medal Of Honor combined stealth gameplay with an emotive World War II setting to powerful dramatic effect and, naturally, this remains the sequel's strongest suit, but developer Dreamworks Interactive is clearly intent on delivering a little extra.

Enter the 'buddies', helpful CPU-controlled characters inspired by the interactive 'Barnies' in *Half-Life*. Buddies will fall into the player's thrall at various stages of the game, and will respond to a few simple commands like wingmen in a flight sim.

Half-Life also showed how rewarding set-piece action sequences could be in firstperson shooters. Once again Dreamworks has taken the cue and introduces Nazis atop motorcycles, half-tracks and tanks.

But while the big guns promise noise, stealth has not been forgotten. The player begins as a member of the French Resistance, and Dreamworks has abetted covert infiltration by providing a disguise mode. This adds a little light relief to the gunplay, as the player can pass himself off as an official Third Reich photographer, whipping out a camera before flash-happy Nazi guards who strike a pose before being capped by the player's concealed Luger.

Clearly, then, Dreamworks is at pains to ensure that *Medal Of Honour Underground* is a worthy sequel. Expect graphical tweaks, new weaponry and fresh locations such as Morocco and Italy incorporated into a cracking stealth-shooter.

■ Developer: **Dreamworks**

■ Publisher: **EA**





Though it's hard to tell from the right hand on view, the lead character in *Medal Of Honour Underground* is female resistance fighter Manon, who played a supporting role in the original game. The sequel follows her career from fledging French Resistance fighter to hard-nosed OSS (Office of Strategic Services) Nazi-butchering operative

Spiderman

Even Peter Parker would wonder at the sophisticated way in which Neversoft has handled the videogame transformation of Spidey, working his skills into an eminently playable stealth adventure



Spiderman was the PlayStation game of the show by a narrow margin, nudging ahead of the competition thanks to an innovative approach which should prove to be the perfect translation of the comic strip licence to videogames.

Each of the web-slinger's salient powers has found a niche in the game, particularly his wall-climbing prowess. Bounding from skyscraper to skyscraper, scaling vertical walls and spinning a succession of silk-based lianas makes for fast-paced, gripping gameplay.

Spidey is perfectly suited to stealth play and developer Neversoft has exploited the opportunity. Few other videogame characters look so comfortable hanging from the ceiling – which turns translucent – and Spiderman is able to crawl above unsuspecting security guards and reach objectives without resorting to violence. This is always an option, though, and Spidey is eminently equipped for fisticuffs. Advantage is gained if the superhero can gain the element of surprise, triggering special attacks.

The use of web power particularly helps to capture the flavour of the comic strip, and the Spidey sense even tingles (an icon flickers above the superhero's head) when enemies are close or a puzzle requires the player's attention.

Spiderman appears to have it all. One glimpse of Spidey swinging, dropping to the floor and then bounding on to a wall should be enough to convince any doubters.

■ Developer: **Neversoft**

■ Publisher: **Activision**











Spiderman goes through his web-swinging, crime-stopping paces. Comic strip aficionados have been keen to discover which of Spidey's arch-enemies will appear in the game. Rhino and Scorpion have been confirmed, but there's no word on Dr Doom or the Green Goblin yet. Each supervillain has a unique achilles heel which Spidey can exploit to defeat them at the end of a level

DinoCrisis2

Despite the success of *Dino Crisis*, Capcom worked hard on the sequel. The game has moved into lush, prerendered jungle terrain redolent of 'Jurassic Park'. The lightning dino attacks have been rebalanced to give the player at least half a chance, and raptors now attack in packs – even if they are almost too hesitant in their attacks at times. However, the skeleton of a proper realtime dino-horror game is firmly in place and **Edge** now awaits the flesh.

■ Developer: **Capcom**

■ Publisher: **Virgin**





TonyHawk'sProSkater2

A return to Tony Hawk's high-grossing world is in the pipeline, complete with new bail animations, enhanced graphics, and the opportunity to design levels for a wealth of fresh tricks











Tony Hawk contributed a great deal of skating expertise to the first game, although, by his own admission, he has had less input on the sequel. Apparently all the tricks featured are possible, though maybe not in combo





The sequel to one of the biggest PlayStation games of 1999 can hardly be ignored, particularly when it looks so choice. Clearly there is little room for wholesale changes to the formula, but the refinements Neversoft has made are certainly worth a mention.

Foremost among them is the level editor, which is simple to use and enables the player to place objects drawn from a 100-strong range around a skate park. Added replay value is the intention, though whether most players will enjoy the arduous process of level balancing is debatable. Amateur efforts are more likely to produce comedy value.

Beyond new tricks, skaters, parks and some spectacular combo sequences, new features are limited, though footing and balance indicators have been added to help the player adjust mid-trick and stretch out the move. Other improvements are mainly graphical: smoother animations, more realistic textures and bigger skater models all contribute to the enhanced visuals. The new bail animations, however, are a significant improvement. For example, players can now lose their balance, topple backwards and squirt their board in the opposite direction. Nothing revolutionary, but still a worthy development that'll undoubtedly be a big hit.

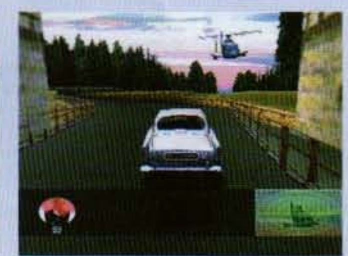
- Developer: **Neversoft**
- Publisher: **Activision**

007Racing

Driver meets James Bond as EA deploys a killer licence with a pursuit game based around classic car chase sequences from several Bond films. The Lotus ('Octopussy'), the BMW ('Tomorrow Never Dies') and, of course, the Aston Martin DB-7 feature against a procession of familiar helicopter and motorcycle-borne goons. Eutechnyx (*Total Drivin'*) is on the case, and **Edge** hopes the urge to clean up on the licence won't stop it producing a first-class game.

- Developer: **Eutechnyx**
- Publisher: **EA**





Driver2

Step back into Tanner's shoes as he does his undercover thing around the streets of Las Vegas, Chicago, Rio De Janeiro and Havana as Reflections follows up its 1999 belter











Improved graphics, greater traffic density, decent plot and zealous bug-testing are all on the cards for the sequel to 1999 hit *Driver*. Expect a splitscreen, twoplayer race and pursuit modes, new sub-games and different cities (Las Vegas, Chicago, Rio and Havana). The reengineered engine can handle player-character Tanner getting out of his car, chasing down suspects and commandeering any vehicle he can stop. Curved roads and freeway overpasses are also included. *Driver 2* will clearly be an improvement in every regard over its predecessor, but doesn't look like having the same impact.

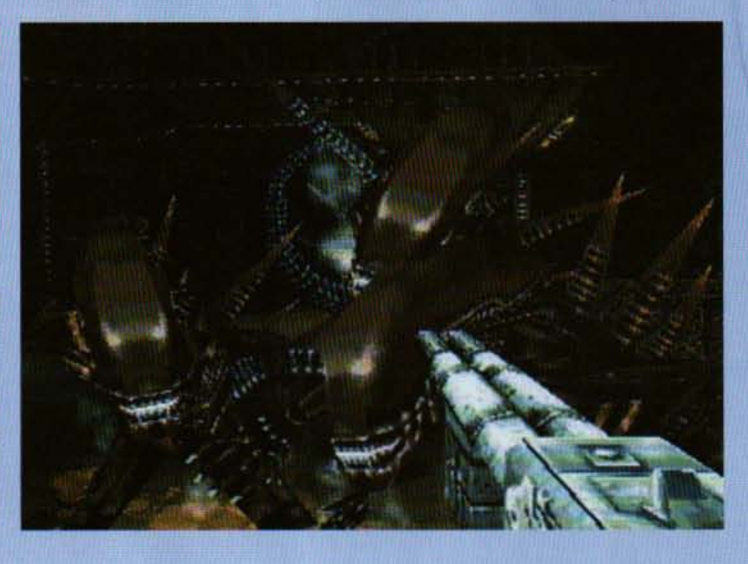
- Developer: **Reflections**
- Publisher: **Infogrames**

AlienResurrection

After a poor showing at ECTS, Argonaut has turned this tale of firstperson terror in deep space into one of the titles that looks most likely to do it for PS in the coming months







Alien Resurrection looked appalling at ECTS last year, but is now a firstperson shooter that reaffirms faith in the PlayStation. The game looks stunning and has taken an offbeat approach to the FPS which brilliantly conveys the intensity of the films. Shadows are cast all around, and when the aliens do attack they launch themselves from walls, ceilings and floors. Aside from the raw violence, developer Argonaut assures **Edge** the game will loosely follow the plot of the film, so human marines, Alien Queens and dubious hybrids will all find themselves in the player's sights at some point.

- Developer: **Argonaut**
- Publisher: **Fox Interactive**



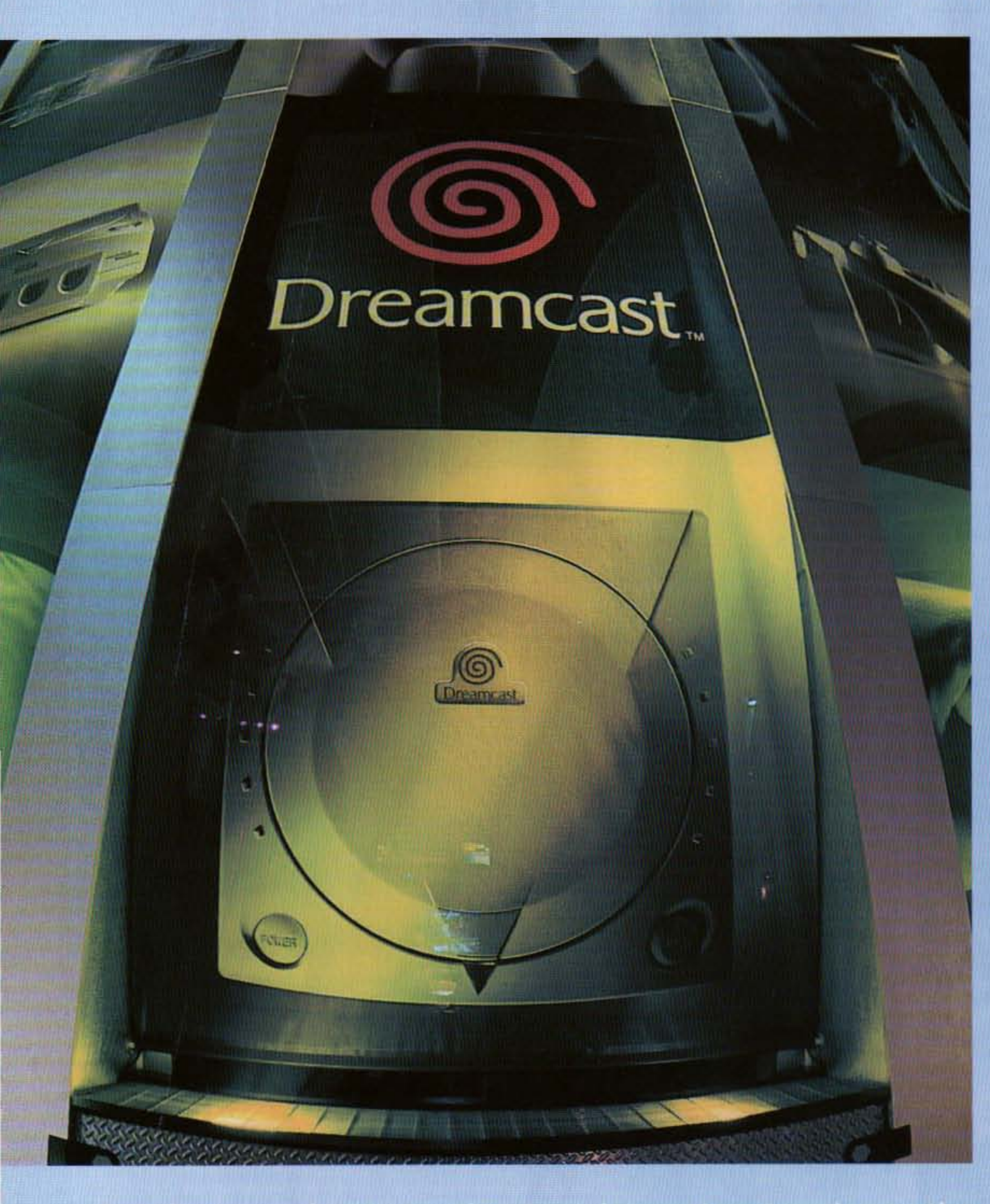


DaveMirraFreestyleBMX

Appearing in much improved form than its Alphas emergence last issue, *Dave Mirra* is coming along nicely, displaying more player-friendliness in the gameplay department than the developer's previous attempt, *Thrasher: Skate & Destroy*. Control is fluid and intuitive and the modifier option opens up a huge trick repertoire. There is competition, however, in the form of Neversoft's Mat Hoffman licence (see Alphas), but Z-Axis may well pull it off this time.

- Developer: **Z-Axis**
- Publisher: **Acclaim**

Dreamcast



Far more confidently than could have been predicted, Sega of America used E3 to hammer home the message that it's: 'Taking gamers where gaming is going'. While it rightly believes that place is online, whether a 56Kbps modem is the right vehicle to go there wasn't an issue it chose to address.

That aside, Sega's key American market was treated to a slew of top titles. Stacked against the teetering pile of under-developed PS2 games, *F355 Challenge*, *Quake III Arena*, *Out Trigger* and dozens of other networkable games presented a force to be reckoned with.

Reaction from industry lights to Sega's showing of 90-plus titles, of which 40 per cent were claimed to offer online features, was largely positive. However, Dreamcast titles are notably absent from the majority of thirdparty publishers' 2001 release schedules. PS2 development has quietly bled Dreamcast dry of new games, other than those Sega produces itself.

Viewing the selection of in-house (or nearly in-house) titles, it is also clear that Dreamcast development is just getting into its stride. From *Jet Grind Radio* to *Metropolis Street Racer*, the technical potency Sega's machine is capable of was underlined. Ironic – and unfortunate for Sega – that this should happen just as publishers are pulling the plug on DC development.

Sega's European operation was typically mute at E3, with CEO JF Cecillion opting not to attend. The desperately-needed announcement of a European price cut failed to happen, although as **Edge** went to press retail chain Dixons announced it was offering a Dreamcast with a lead title for £145.

For the second year running Sega leaves Los Angeles as the E3 king. Its show line-ups are consistently innovative, daring and extremely playable. So why aren't gamers listening?

OutTrigger

With competition hot in the firsperson shooter genre at the show, this simple, straightforward title, which hails from the arcades, proved a winner







Despite the rash of quality console-based firstperson shooters at E3, *Out Trigger* proved to be one of the most compelling on offer.

This was particularly strange considering the less than rapturous reception of its Naomi incarnation. But, true to those roots, the Dreamcast version of *Out Trigger* is extremely simple and straightforward to play. It may not be a classic FPS (there is the option of a thirdperson view) but it doesn't mess around with any pretensions. The goal is simple: frag opponents as fast as possible.

While the arcade version followed a standard FPS format, using a joystick to move and a trackball to look, the console version maps all movement to the analogue stick, controlling strafing with the triggers. While this clunky setup proves initially disconcerting, it's well matched to the restrictive nature of many of the levels. The other buttons are used to fire, cycle weapons and jump, but the game will also support a mouse/keyboard setup for players averse to the joypad.

The graphical style is colourful and the targeting of enemies over the top. There are lots of well-defined power-ups and firepower ranges from guided missiles to sniper rifles. Most weapons can provide a single-shot kill.

As with most forthcoming Dreamcast games, as well as the time-dependent singleplayer mode, up to four players are also supported either on a splitscreen or online via SegaNet.

- Developer: **AM2**
- Publisher: **Sega**







The vibrant, superbly detailed, fast-paced and wonderfully compelling world of *Out Trigger* proved popular with the E3 crowd with reason. Easily one of Edge's favourite games from the LA-based expo

QuakeIIIArena

Online fighters had their first opportunity to size up the most eagerly awaited Dreamcast title to date, but it was too early to call how the game will fare overall



Quake III Arena is the online gaming shooter, and after some early uncertainty it will be released on the first console to ship with online capabilities. While id isn't working on the game, Raster Productions appears to be getting the Dreamcast conversion job done.

The majority of the work on display involved the game's networking code and, minor problems aside, the online functionality of the game over a 56K modem appeared fine.

More good news came in the form of Sega's unveiling of its three-button mouse. PC gamers have been dismissive of Dreamcast players' chances when cross-platform *Quake*-ing using the joypad, so this levelling of the playing field proved to be a popular, if not entirely unexpected, measure. As anticipated, using the joypad as a controller was less than satisfactory. In particular, the joystick proved to be too sensitive to be used a 'look' device. The jump action (using the left trigger) also felt weak.

Less satisfactory, however, was the state of the rest of the game. Despite assurances that 60fps was the aim of the developer, at some points the refresh rate fell well below 30fps. In addition, there was no singleplayer code implemented and a lot of the bots' AI seemed to be broken, which made for some frustrating games. However, as long as the online aspects of the game are implemented, it seems certain *Quake III Arena* will do the business, at least for Sega of America.

■ Developer: **Raster Productions**

■ Publisher: **Sega**





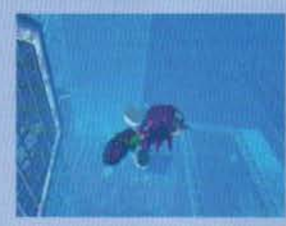




Graphically the conversion currently appears faithful to its PC parent, though frame rate issues still grate. Though mostly unplayable using a joypad, a keyboard/mouse option exists

SonicAdventure2

Video reveals a title as impressive its former incarnation, but promises high-speed fourplayer thrills around stages of Sonic's domain





Much of *Sonic Adventure 2*'s action seems to occur in San Francisco, the setting for a large proportion of games nowadays. One of the most impressive sequences to date involves the swift blue spiky mammal attempting to outrun an angry and very determined US-style truck (far right)

Long known to be in development and an inevitable release, *Sonic Adventure 2* made its worldwide debut at E3, albeit only in video form. Featuring set pieces as impressive as those of the original, the key point of interest in the trailer was a section revealing simultaneous fourplayer action. Judging by what was on show, participants will be able to race Sonic and co *en masse* through typically rapid stages.

With just over a year of development between the two incarnations, it will be interesting to see whether Sonic Team has had time to address some of the game's design issues. Clunky character control will not rest so easily a second time around. And with Dr Eggman (aka Robotnik) remaining as lead bad guy, similarities in plot structure are surely to be expected.

Although Naka-san is overseeing the project, his ground-level involvement is presumably limited, given the promised international debut for *Phantasy Star Online* this year. Sega has confirmed that *Sonic Adventure 2* will be a definite 2001 release in all western territories.

- Developer: **Sonic Team**
- Publisher: **Sega**

SonicShuffle

The blue hedgehog and friends do a *Mario Party* and take to virtual boardgaming over five zones, albeit with Internet capability

In *Sonic Shuffle*, Sega has created a virtual board game starring its digital stars *à la Mario Party*. The evil Void has stolen a set of mystical crystals and the Sonic crew must play through various minigames to regain the treasures. The 'shuffle' aspect is derived from the deck of cards which must be drawn from to decide how far your character will move. Up to four contestants – either at home or online – choose from eight characters and play around a board which features five zones.

- Developer: **Sonic Team**
- Publisher: **Sega**





Spawn: The Demon's Hand

Thirdperson battler that was reminiscent of *Power Stone* earlier in development disappoints due to unconvincing, uninvolving gameplay







When *Spawn: In The Demon's Hand* appeared at E3 '99 **Edge** was interested, but this is a disappointment.

The gameplay seems loose and cold, and proves an uninvolving thirdperson battle. Its curious blend of hand-to-hand combat and long-range weaponry fails to hit the spot.

Spawn's multiplayer and online battles are pitched over large arenas, with a lucky dip of 11 characters to root around in. The game also features a singleplayer battle mode, but as with *Quake III Arena* the enjoyment is to be had by playing against others. Sadly, as things stand there simply isn't much fun to be had.

■ Developer / **Capcom**

■ Publisher / **In-house**

Ultimate Fighting Championship

Mad martial arts free-for-all in a cage makes its videogaming debut, featuring thousands of different moves and combinations







Boasting the only official Ultimate Fighting Championship licence (a US mixed martial arts contact sport), this presented several good arguments for its existence. Although currently bland in appearance, the game's character animation is solid, with good collision detection between the fighters.

More than 3,000 moves and 1,200 combos are tangled into the game, with *Ready 2 Rumble*-style effects such as facial bruising also featured. Also borrowed from Midway's game is a fighter training mode, with the added facility to customise the appearance of combatants in the game.

■ Developer: **Anchor**

■ Publisher: **Crave**





SoulReaver2

The second episode of Raziel's journey through the underworld starts where the first ended. The game has been designed be more thoughtful than before, with Raziel needing to solve tightly designed puzzles to progress. A slick 60fps is expected, with improved textures and lighting effects – mainly because the DC *Soul Reaver* was a port from PlayStation. This time a PS2 game will be ported from the DC core. It's rumoured a prequel is also being considered.

■ Developer: **Crystal Dynamics**

■ Publisher: **Eidos**

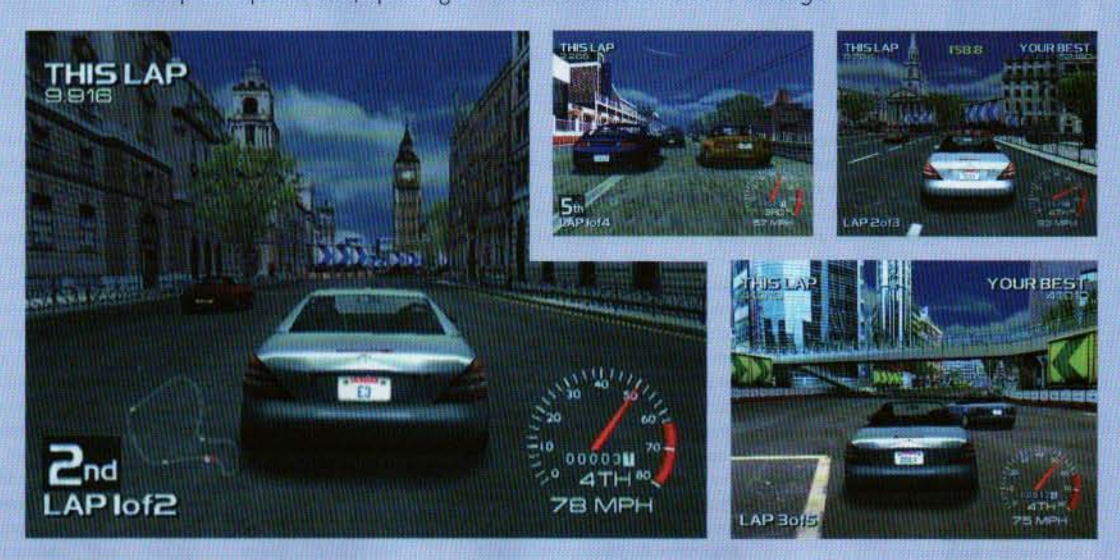
MetropolisStreetRacer

One of the most exciting Dreamcast racers in development lives up to expectations, sparking as much interest as *F355 Challenge*

Sega Europe's star performer, *Metropolis Street Racer*, was extremely promising. With the handling and graphics improving at every corner of the development road, *MSR* could be the game to truly validate SOE's much vaunted 1.5-party publishing system.

The handling has come in for criticism in the US, but as many Americans never have to stray from an arrow-straight, multi-laned freeway their opinions are best taken with a pinch of salt. With this and *F355 Challenge en route*, the Dreamcast may yet reserve a space in the hearts of driving game fans across the globe.

- Developer: **Bizarre Creations**
- Publisher: **Sega**



FerrariF355Challenge

A touch of Italian class was added to the Dreamcast line-up in the from of AM2's near-perfect port of this successful arcade racer

Yu Suzuki's passionate and faithful ode to the prancing horse slipped from under its Dreamcast coversheet at E3. While the option to hit the track wasn't selectable, the twoplayer mode was smooth and very playable. As with the *Twin* version of the coin-op, the camera angle has been widened to compensate for the loss of the *Challenge* cabinet side-screens.

Visually, there is little to complain about, as AM2 has made a near-perfect replica of the coin-op. A 60fps update was expected and delivered. For the racing fan, the September release date can't come soon enough.

- Developer: **AM2**
- Publisher: **Sega**







Ready2RumbleRound2

Ready 2 Rumble Round 2 weighed in on several formats at E3, leading on DC and PS2. Michael Jackson has been signed to appear as a bonus character, extending a relationship with videogames that stretches back to Sega's *Moonwalker* coin-op. The pace of the game has been tweaked and characters are more detailed. Where before all blows landed equally fast, players must time their biggest blows to avoid being picked off by fast jabs.

- Developer: **Midway**
- Publisher: **In-house**





E3 In the eyes of...



Peter Molyneux
Founder, Lionhead

Edge: With *Black & White* already signed for X-Box, do you think that others will be swayed by its PC developer-friendly ways?
Peter Molyneux: The only thing is, of course, that what you need is console games on this next-generation hardware. PlayStation and Dreamcast developers are very good at coming up with titles with massmarket appeal.

PC developers, some of them, are producing software which is just not going to translate very well across to a console. You can't imagine *Civilisation* being played on a TV, you're not going to come home from the pub and play 15 minutes of that – it's just not in the game design. I think the whole industry is changing and adapting itself to this new format, it's a difficult transition period. But it's no different to the last time this happened.

Edge: X-Box is selling itself on the ability to handle complex physics. Is that the real revolution in next-gen gaming?
PM: The physics engines and the AI engine and some of the more revolutionary 3D engines, fitting all that into a compulsive game design is going to be a really interesting challenge. You think, 'I'll have a physics engine in my game', where in fact, quite often in a game, that's the very thing you don't use.

Hollywood doesn't use physics: if Hollywood used physics, actors couldn't jump off 20-foot walls without spraining their ankles. It's not real physics they're dealing with – it just looks believable. It needs to be tempered with what the gameplay needs, and that's another tricky mix in the game design. It's going to be interesting to see what the great Japanese designers do with this new-found power. Last time there was a great leap in power we got *Mario 64*, and there's something akin to that step forward in gameplay for next-gen.

Edge: Given the development time of *Black & White*, your next game will be well-placed to utilise broadband.
PM: Definitely. Already, we're thinking about broadband. It takes away a lot of the problems with the Internet and just allows you to do some immensely cool stuff. The key thing about broadband is that when the Japanese designers start thinking about multiplayer online games then we're going to see the revolution we've all been waiting for. It's got to be immediate, quick, and those are going to start coming out fairly soon, and that's going to be very interesting. The design sensibilities of Taito's *Bust-A-Move* might seem apt. Something very accessible, very easy, taking all the techiness out of the online side. And broadband is when that will start happening. Lots of people are saying, 'Is this Internet 2, the sequel, with all the problems cleared out?' I don't know about that, as there's a hell of a lot of game design that needs doing.

Edge: Do you think broadband is the industry's 'next 3D'?
PM: The biggest difference you can make in a console isn't putting a faster processor in there, it's a new way of playing a game.

Edge: Like the N64's analogue stick...
PM: Exactly. That enabled you to write games that you couldn't write in any other way, and there haven't been any of those steps forward in this next-generation hardware. But what there have been are the things that you can plug into your console; the Internet stuff, DVD. That gives quite interesting opportunities when you think about it – especially the DVD movies side. I wouldn't be surprised if we start to see some other things on DVD discs. I've actually been thinking for a while about what could you do, given the fact that you've got a movie on this DVD and you've got a game console as well. Sure enough you can play the movie – what else can you do while the movie is playing?

Edge: That's starting to sound dangerously like multimedia...
PM: Yeah, we've got to be careful. This isn't the first time this message has been sent. It started with the Commodore Amiga CDTV, which I thought looked very revolutionary in terms of its design – it could live above a video. I think it's going to be very interesting to see what comes out.

E3 In the eyes of...



Peter Moore
President, Sega America

Edge: Everyone's saying that E3 is Sega's show once again, and they seem to be quite surprised by that...
Peter Moore: It's getting a little monotonous. It was supposed to be somebody else's show, but it didn't turn out that way.

Edge: How do you feel about that, given that much the industry is backing PlayStation2 by default?
PM: Well, you know I'm a rookie in the business but I've been around long enough to realise that everybody is always looking at the next best thing. As we transition into this period of the next-gen console, what people fail to recognise is that we've got a brand here that understands videogaming, with decades of experience and knowing what it needs to do. When you've got the like of what we've got walking around here – Yu Suzuki for *Shenmue*, Mizuguchi-san for *Space Channel 5*, Naka-san for *Sonic* and *Phantasy Star Online*. Combine all of that with our passion for games.

Edge: How will that passion translate into the reality of war with Sony?
PM: One of the most telling statements at the PlayStation2 launch was that they said they're not about videogaming any more, they're about the future of entertainment. As far as I'm concerned they're walking away from the gamer and Sega will never do that. They won't let me on the carpet over there [gestures to neighbouring Sony stand], but from what everyone tells me it's pretty boring. Everybody always focuses on the future, but they forget about the guys like us, with a second generation of software. Clearly we'll have 200 titles on the platform by Christmas. And, as always with Sega, we'll have genre-busting titles like one of the hits of the show, *Samba de Amigo*. And of course the jewel in the crown – online gaming.

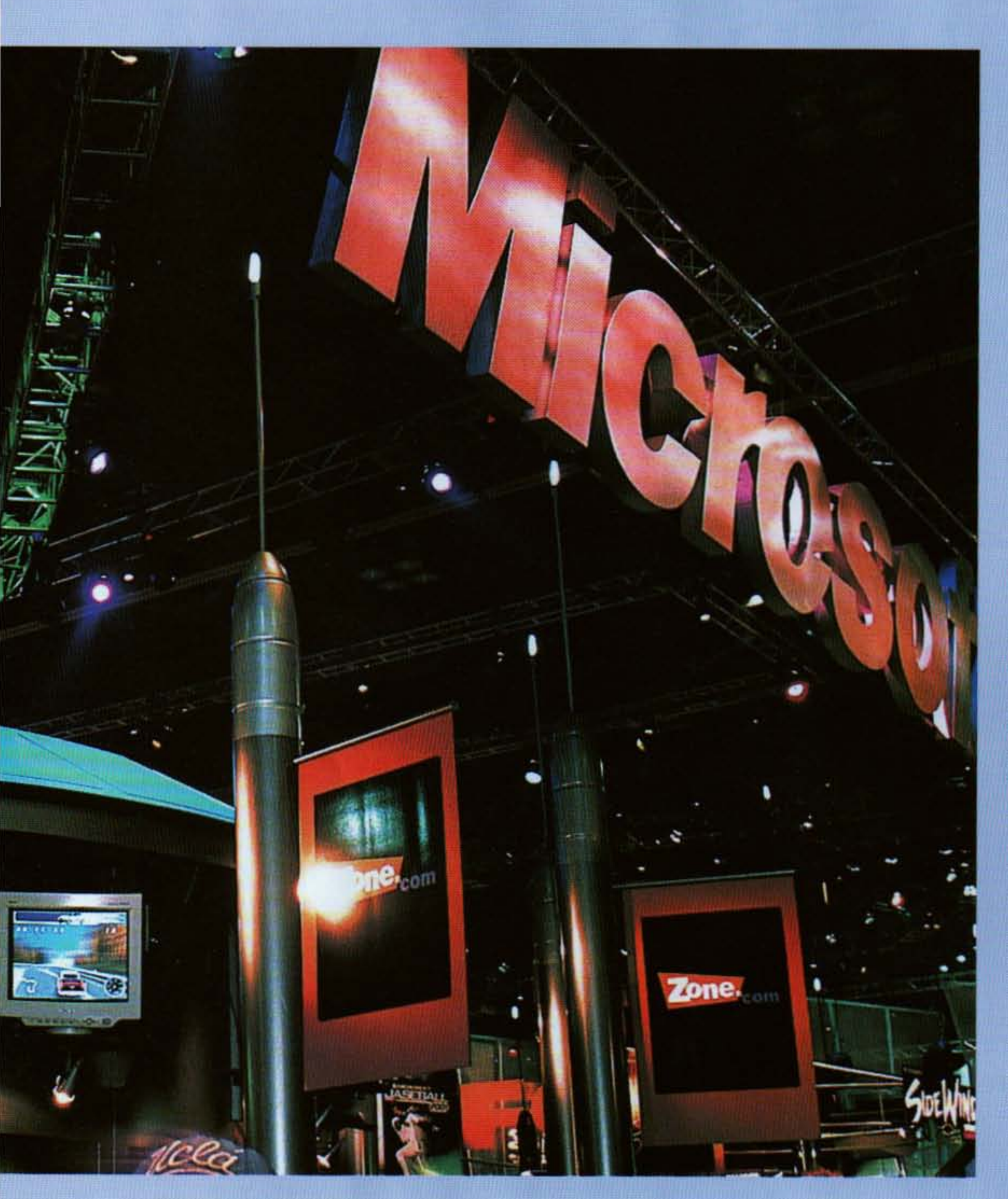
Edge: Looking to 2001, there seems to be a distinct lack of thirdparty support for Dreamcast.
PM: We haven't done a lot of announcements here – there are going to be some major announcements. Sierra will be here in a minute to talk with me about *Half-Life*, which is going to be a great game for the console. And our friends at Eidos and Crave, GOD, Midway, Konami, Acclaim, Activision – everybody other than our good friends at EA. I think we've always relied on firstparty for the real blockbusters and thirdparties always come along to support the line.

Launch games like *Soul Calibur* and *Ready 2 Rumble* – they'll keep coming. The one thing that we do that Sony doesn't is that constant flow of brilliant content out of the mother company – whether it's *Crazy Taxi* or *Sonic*, they don't have that. Having said that, EA has almost become in-house for them, and there's SquareSoft, obviously. But we're a gaming company and damn proud of it.

Edge: Is online gaming really a massmarket attraction?
PM: We've done a lot of research on this, and we have a saying at Sega America; that we're taking gamers where gaming is going. And that's online. So you have this huge thing which is console gaming. It's a monster. And you have this big monster over here which is the Internet and online, and you've got to bring people that way. Right now we can't even get PC gamers and console gamers in the same focus group – they don't like each other. It's not about introducing PC gamers to the ease of console gaming. Clearly it's about taking console gamers online. Will it happen overnight? No. Most good things don't.

Edge: What's your current sales target for Dreamcast?
PM: Five million by the end of the fiscal year. One thing we don't know is the volumetric study on what the concept of the rebate brings to play. We're trying to follow consumer behaviour but we're going into a place where no other company has gone – giving hardware away. Yeah, you have to sign up to Sega.net, but it's priced the same as AOL. We don't know what will happen. Five million is our worst case scenario. Bottom line is: it's all about content.

PC



Despite continually waning software sales, the PC remains the target box of choice for a significant chunk of the videogame development sector, especially in the US, and E3 ably demonstrated this.

The format's relative ease of connectivity has ensured it healthy support, and the number of PC games offering some form of online gaming option, from *Black & White* to the latest version of *Ultima Online*, and all the spurious endeavours in between, was frankly staggering.

And yet the openness of the architecture did not offer up as many innovations as previous E3s had offered. Resource management elements have seemingly crept into every type of PC game; the firstperson shooter refuses to lie down; and grand new takes on hackneyed fantasy-styled visions – each set to make little more than a scratch on the PC game sales top 20 – were everywhere.

Which made picking out potential winners difficult. But over the next few pages, along with titles such as *Halo* and *Republic* – shown at E3 in a significantly more advanced state than when **Edge** previously had the opportunity to view them – a number of significant PC games stand out.

Despite Microsoft's plans for X-Box, the future of PC gaming looks as assured as ever. Lionhead may be about to abandon the format for good (see News), having only produced one title on it, but few other PC developers appear willing – or perhaps able – to redirect their energies towards the closed environments of consoledom.

If this year's E3 is any indicator, PC gamers keeping the faith will be rewarded over the next 12 months with some of the most stimulating games the world has ever seen.

While overall winners were hard to single out, online was definitely the watchword for PC developers this year, with the vast majority of titles offering an Internet dimension

Republic: The Revolution

Demis Hassabis and crew fight against time to get a demo of the game up and running before E3 opens its doors. They make it. Just



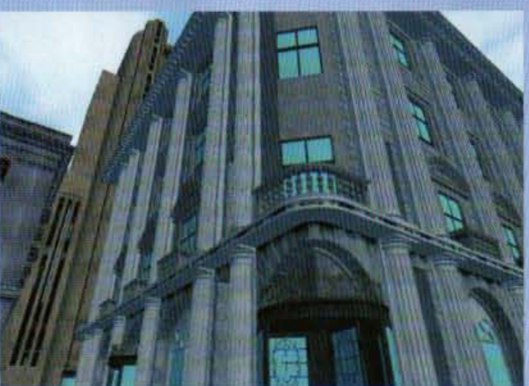
Having realised that controlling a million characters was a daunting and rather impractical proposition, Elixir has now implemented a system whereby you only interact with key figures within *Republic*. The idea is to move to the capital from your humble regional base and overthrow the country's leader.

Building a network of relationships with these key figures is fundamental, and the connections between them are represented in a realistically complex manner. You may opt to encourage trade union leaders to strike, have papparazzi snap you holding a baby as a way of gaining public support, or dig the dirt on a rival for a smear campaign.

The demo had pedestrians going about their daily routines, with an impressive level of detail. The engine was far from optimised but expect this to be sorted, along with gameplay extras, by the time the game marches into shops next year.

- Developer: **Elixir**
- Publisher: **Eidos**









Although the game was running in a modestly sized window, the animation of the various civilians walking around the game's streets was pleasingly lifelike. Zooming in on different parts of the buildings, Demis Hassabis demonstrated his team's famed infinite polygon engine, with predictably impressive results. Players are able to determine the amount of involvement they wish to have





Sacrifice

Shiny returns with this visually arresting title, another one of its trademark renditions of a tried-and-tested genre













All of the major spells have catastrophic consequences, destroying scenery and taking anyone stood around with it. Graphically, this was one of the strongest PC titles at E3

This move into the crowded RTS PC market is a first for Shiny. But, of course, the developer isn't looking to imitate the current leaders, preferring instead to blend its own innovative elements into the mix.

Sacrifice sees you take on the role of a wizard working for a god. In an attempt at making something more action-oriented and fluid than the usual RTS fare, you're forced to go out and gain experience by engaging the enemy rather than have your game centred on a static base. You have an altar on which to sacrifice opponents to your god, which earns you more spells and souls, but the emphasis is very much converting non-believers to your faith. In essence, the game's five different gods are fighting each other, manipulating you with offers of spells, which offers the opportunity of defecting to another side, of course.

As in *Messiah*, the game uses Shiny's realtime deformation and tessellation system, ensuring lower-end PC users can still enjoy this potential must-have. Expect an autumn release.

- Developer: Shiny Entertainment
- Publisher: Interplay

ReturnToCastleWolfenstein

The return of the legendary title attracted a huge amount of interest in LA, but what Gray Matter is doing with the game proved as much a draw as its heritage

In development at the offices of Gray Matter, this new *Wolfenstein* created one of the biggest stirs at E3, not only because of its heritage but because of what's being done with such rich potential. The *Quake III* engine is being given another workout, facing the player against Nazi experiments gone bad. The results throw up zombie-esque soldiers by the cartload, but the detailed environments are the real stars. Realistic physics appears to be the icing on the cake.

- Developer: **Gray Matter**
- Publisher: **Activision**

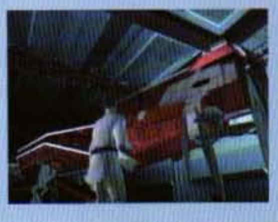


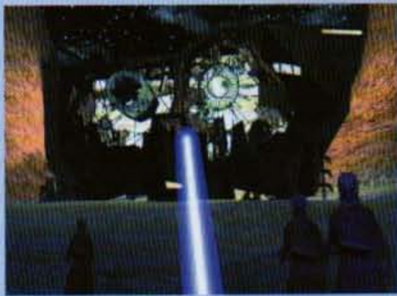




StarWars:EpisodeOne:Obi-Wan

Assume the role of Ewan McGregor's Obi-Wan Kenobi in an adventure that demands you develop your own Jedi skills and open yourself to The Force






Clearly moulded in the vein of the *Dark Forces* series, *Obi-Wan* sees players assuming the role of Ewan McGregor's character over more than 12 levels of thirdperson action.

The emphasis here is on Jedi combat: armed only with a lightsaber, Obi-Wan must incorporate rolls, flips and jumps into his fighting repertoire. This is effected via what appear to be relatively complex mouse and keyboard commands, potentially making for a steep learning curve.

A selection of vertigo-inducing environments look set to make this one of the PC's more intriguing actioners.

- Developer: **LucasArts**
- Publisher: **In-house**

Halo

While only on show as a trailer, *Halo* looked technically impressive and offered up a vision of an amazingly absorbing multiplayer environment





Shown as a ten-minute-long cinematic sequence using in-game footage (similar to *Metal Gear Solid 2*'s appearance), *Halo* currently looks excellent. Extremely detailed and animated soldiers signal to one other, drive jeeps, steal alien ships before taking to the air aboard them, and provide cover fire. In addition to its technical merits and an action-packed oneplayer mode, it's the multiplayer aspects of the game that really excite. The ability to share tasks such as driving a jeep with two shooting LAN (or Internet) buddies and plan strategic attacks on the alien opposition sounds wonderfully compelling.

- Developer: **Bungie Software**
- Publisher: **Take 2 Interactive**




QuakeIIITeamArena

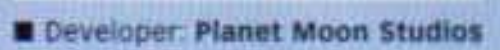
A mission pack for *Quake III*, *Team Arena* is the logical next step for the series, and it had fans fawning over it throughout E3. New team power-ups, including Scout (doubles speed) and Doubler (doubles damage), are made available at team bases, and an arsenal of new weapons are also offered, including an updated version of the nailgun, and new proximity mine launchers and chainguns. And look out for the soon-to-be-legendary shield.

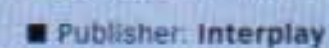
- Developer: id Software
- Publisher: Activision

Giants

With this project nearing completion, developer Planet Moon Studios opted to show off the fully working multiplayer mode in LA

Currently one of the sweetest-looking things in PC land, **Edge** was shown *Giants* at E3 complete with a multiplayer mode where two players could engage in a frenetic battle to the death. Plenty of comical instances ensued: the giants can use scenery and nearby animals as weapons, crush their opponents or simply pick up smaller adversaries and impale them on their gigantic spiky belt to eat later. The playability is matched by superbly colourful and fantastical settings that is *Giants'* world. The title certainly has come a long way since appearing on **E**69's cover.


■ Developer: **Planet Moon Studios**


■ Publisher: **Interplay**







UltimaWorldsOnline:Origin

It's safe to say that Origin didn't know quite what it was starting with the original *Ultima Online*. With the sequel, it knows exactly what's at stake

Taking obvious visual cues from *Everquest*, this enormously ambitious RPG pushes the *Ultima* tag out of the limelight as the Origin software label disintegrates to become just another part of EA.

With creative input from American comic book king Todd McFarlane, this sequel features some of the most plainly odd creatures ever seen in an adventure title.

The team behind the game expects the software's complexity to further encourage gameplay based around social activity rather than traditional core action.

Needless to say, this one's going to be absolutely *huge*.

■ Developer: **In-house**

■ Publisher: **EA Games**







AmericanMcGee'sAlice

Everywhere you went at E3 people were talking about this title as the sleeper hit of the show. Upon eventually finding time to sample it, however, **Edge** was left with an overwhelming feeling of 'And?' Perhaps it's because PC watchers aren't aware of the delights of the console platformer, which is exactly what this title is styled on. Its *QIII* engine delivers some pretty visuals, and everything has a pleasantly twisted edge, but don't hold your breath…

■ Developer: **Rogue Entertainment**

■ Publisher: **EA Games**





Nintendo 64



Refusing to be pressured into a hardware announcement, Nintendo reinforced the N64 and Game Boy Color. Rare continued its traditionally strong presence with *Dinosaur Planet*, *Conker's Bad Fur Day*, *Banjo-Tooie*, *Mickey's Speedway USA* and *Perfect Dark*. The company's popularity was only challenged by the inspired *Mario Tennis 64* and *Excitebike 64* (reviewed on p88). The largest proportion of the stand was devoted to *Pokémon*, and *Gold* and *Silver* GBC versions met *Pokémon Stadium*, *Tetris* rip-off *Pokémon Puzzle League*, and *Hey You, Pikachu* for the 64bit generation. Maybe by next year's E3 Kyoto's largest videogames manufacturer will have decided to join its competitors in 128bit land.

A couple of potential gems (just) save Nintendo from an embarassingly thin E3 presence despite no new hardware and the continuing over reliance on the *Pokémon* franchise

DinosaurPlanet

One of Rare's most ambitious titles to date reaches its final year of development and looks set to deliver one of the last technically impressive, engrossing, and epic N64 adventures













Sabre or Krystal (with trusty pterodactyl and triceratops sidekicks in tow) travel to Dinosaur Planet, where an evil power threatens to destabilise the universe. Exotic locations are recreated with Rare's usual aplomb and a cast of 50-odd characters pull together to offer a promising and varied 3D adventure.

The two main characters embark on two parallel, though separate, journeys consisting of exploration, puzzle solving, item collection and battling.

Control feels familiar with no obvious camera niggles, though show conditions made detailed assessment tough. Too many people walked away with the idea that this was another Rare production straight out of the *Banjo Kazooie* mould. **Edge** suspects there's more to it than that.

- Developer: **Rare**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**



Another graphically advanced adventure from the second most consistent N64 developer, which hopefully includes more innovation than previous attempts

LegendOfZelda:Majora'sMask

With the emphasis placed on magical mask wearing so as to change Link's characteristics and abilities depending on the situations he encounters, enter a realtime race against the game clock in an intriguing, fast-paced version of Miyamoto's classic. Replayability is ensured via multiple routes through the game (visiting every location in one outing isn't possible within the strict time limit). Whether the concept will please western gamers is arguable, however.

- Developer: **Nintendo**
- Publisher: **In-house**





Conker's Bad Fur Day

Adult-themed 3D platfomer turns Rare's reputation of producing cutesy, family-friendly games on its head as it presents a title complete with swearing, sarcasm and urinating squirrels









Conker's Bad Fur Day won't be to everyone's taste. Even within the mature market at which it's aimed there will be those who'll find some of Conker's antics a step too far. But this is a platformer that offers something other than the usual cuteness.

Edge looks forward to finding out how encounters with the game characters tie in with to the gory, violent nature of the game. A one to fourplayer deathmatch and team games also feature, and everything appears to be up to Rare's usual high standards.

In addition to the swearing, sarcasm and bad behaviour, there are plenty of genuinely amusing moments, such as the superb parody of the opening scene of 'Saving Private Ryan'. At least someone's trying something different on the N64.

- Developer: **Rare**
- Publisher: **In-house**





The transformation from *Twelve Tales: Conker 64* couldn't have been more dramatic – NOA appeared initially aprehensive, yet the title was well received, even if most Americans failed to grasp its finer points

Mickey's Speedway USA

Utilising what is essentially a reworked *Diddy Kong Racing* engine, this Rare-developed, Disney-licensed action-based karting fest features every kid's favourite characters attempting to outbrake each other around 20 US-themed tracks. The revelation that a selection of weapons is at their disposal will hardly come as a heart-stopping surprise. A European release may be unlikely, though that shouldn't necessarily be any cause for sleepless nights.

- Developer: **Rare**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**





BanjoTooie

Far less likely to rouse the Mary Whitehouses of this world than *Conker's Bad Fur Day* comes *Banjo-Tooie*, the sequel to Rare's verson of Miyamoto's *Super Mario 64*



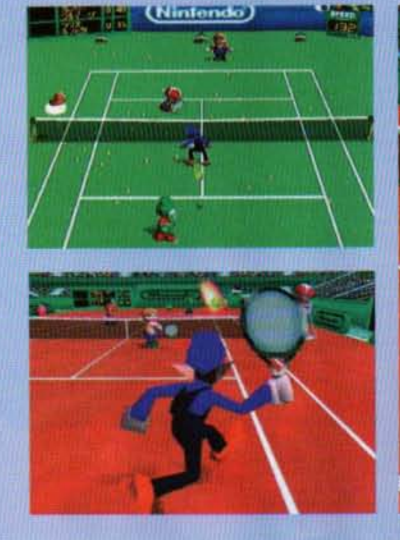
This sees Banjo and partner Kazooie join forces against a recently exhumed Gruntilda and sisters. Eight new worlds, ten new bosses, an anamorphic widescreen mode and a host of mini-games are included.

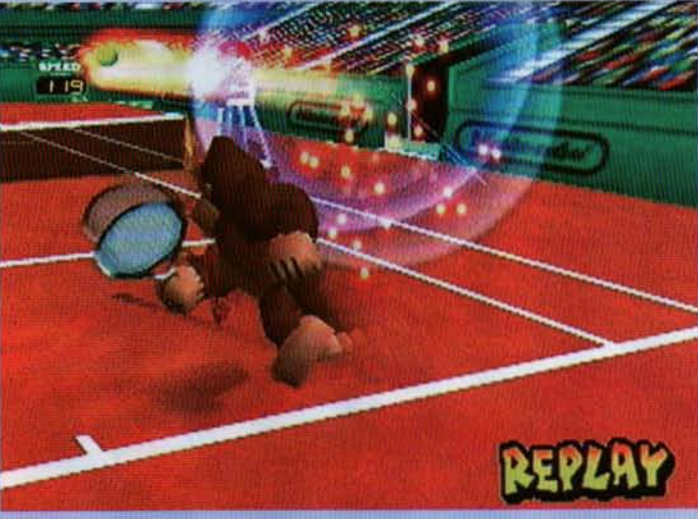
The biggest difference this time around is that the two lead characters can now be controlled independently, although throughout E3 NOA's Ken Lobb was at great pains to emphasis the vastness of the game's levels as its USP. Gigantic scale applies elsewhere, too, as one boss character inflates to the point where Banjo assumes relatively ant-like status. Impressive stuff.

- Developer: **Rare**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**

MarioTennis

The most convincing case of 'why use 50 polygons when 500 will do?' that **Edge** has seen in a long, long while, and the most playable, too





Sega's *Virtua Tennis* may give this a run for its money in terms of playability, but if realism isn't your thing, your search for the perfect fantasy tennis game should be about to come to an end. Utterly playable, wonderfully aesthetic and as balanced as anything else featuring Nintendo's favourite plumber, *Mario Tennis* put almost every other E3 offering to shame – including the majority of next-gen products. Along with *Excitebike 64* (and the now-released *Perfect Dark*), expect this to keep people powering up their Nintendo 64s for far longer than anyone may have reasonably expected.

- Developer: **Camelot**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**





EternalDarkness

Making its second E3 appearance and still not looking particularly enticing, this horror thriller from Silicon Knights (of *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain* 'fame', though not the *Soul Reaver* pseudo-sequel) appears to be lacking a substantial chunk of gameplay. The overall *Resident Evil*-esque gothic theme remains intact, but to date nothing too ingenius appears to have made it into the game. Still, there's opportunity for matters to be rectified before release.

- Developer: **Silicon Knights**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**

TESTSCREEN

VAGRANT STORY

The definitive monthly assessment of the world's latest videogames

Playing the catch-up game

As a multiformat magazine with a limited number of pages available to hand over to reviews each issue, it's difficult to cover everything of note on a monthly basis. But when the umpteenth developer in a row began banging on to **Edge** about the merits of *Rocket: Robot On Wheels*, it was time to seek it out.

It's not difficult to see why the game passed by unnoticed. UbiSoft made no effort to bring the game to **Edge**'s attention, presumably because of its overtly child-friendly overtones. The developer behind the title, Sucker Punch, has no track record to speak of. In truth, upon first glance everything about *Rocket* screams 'mediocre me-too N64 platformer'.

But beneath the all-too-predictable surface, with its lurid colour schemes, super-cute characters offering dumbed-down nuggets of advice, and slab-like walls papered with muddy textures, there lurks a game brimming over with imagination.

Take the first level, for instance. By rounding up four screws – which are, naturally, not the simple, inanimate variety, but living, bouncing characters – and placing them in a square panel located in the upper section of the level you open up a design-your-own-rollercoaster element, allowing you to piece together a theme park attraction from scratch, looping and twisting track at your whim. In another game the finished rollercoaster would be mere window dressing – if it figured at all. In *Rocket* you're given the opportunity to actually test out your creation. It's difficult to imagine any developer other than Nintendo building in something as patently endearing as this.

Moreover, the game features an exceptional physics model, and a raft of daft vehicles and sub-games to experiment with. Problems with camera positioning and some occasionally twitchy controls threaten to spoil the party, but there is more content to marvel at here than there is to grumble over.

One further remarkable aspect of *Rocket* – something brought about by its low profile – is that you can now pick it up for around ten pounds. That's in its box, still shrink-wrapped, brand new.

It's regrettable, but the inevitable lookalikes that followed in *Mario 64*'s wake gave the N64 a reputation as a dumping ground for the type of software that brought about the videogame crash of the early '80s, resulting in the likes of *Rocket* sauntering its way on to store shelves with the likes of *Earthworm Jim 64* completely unnoticed by the **Edge** team. Hopefully Sucker Punch's next project – a PS2 title, apparently – will not suffer such anonymity.





Released back in November last year, *Rocket* has never been examined within these pages. It's easy to see why it passed by unnoticed, but it's certainly worth tracking down – especially at £10

Every issue, **Edge** evaluates the best, most interesting, hyped, innovative or promising games on a scale of ten, where five naturally represents the middle value. A game receiving a 'seven out of ten', for example, is a very competent title with noticeable flaws but which should still appeal to a considerable range of players. It does, after all, score two points above average and should therefore not be considered as such.

Edge's rating system is fair, progressive and balanced. An average game deserves an average mark – not, as many believe, seven out of ten.

Videogames on the **Edge**

This month, Edge has been mostly playing...



Sega Bass Fishing (DC) Sega

A recent stag night rapidly degenerated into a five-hour *Bass Fishing* marathon session during which a 9,995g monster was (eventually) landed.



Mr Driller (PS) Namco

Who would have guessed that the only essential title from Namco's recent releases would be a puzzler with colourful, simplistic visuals?



Virtua Tennis (DC) Sega

A great-looking, infinitely playable game. Sega Europe's decision to hold it until Septembe' will make sense to someone, somewhere. Probably.



Perfect Dark (N64) Rare

The marvel that is online shopping has allowed every member of **Edge**'s editorial team to obtain a US copy of one of the greatest games around.

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VAGRANT STORY

Spells are contained in grimoires that can be found at various stages of the game. Once Ashley casts a particular spell it will be at his disposal for the rest of the game, provided he has sufficient magic points



Cut-scenes depicting Ashley's pursuit of Sydney punctuate the action and create a pace to the game which is sadly undone by the slow-moving combat

Feedback from gamers is rumoured to have prompted Square to reduce the duration of combat animation sequences in the upcoming release of *Final Fantasy IX*. It's a pity this advice wasn't incorporated into *Vagrant Story*, because similarly slow-moving gameplay detracts from what could have been a first-rate game.

The underlying concept is actually quite simple, consisting of a dungeon bash in which countless rooms must be explored and a huge number of monsters overcome. Although simply opening up new areas of the map provides its own incentive to play, there is a tightly plotted background story to provide further impetus to progress. The game takes place a week before the murder of a shadowy dignitary by the name of Duke Bardoba, and the player takes on the role of prime suspect Ashley Riot. However, when the action starts Ashley, a special agent – or Riskbreaker – of the Valendia Knights of the Peace, is in pursuit of the mysterious Sydney Losstarot through the city of Leá Monde.

The graphics are remarkable throughout, and the camera can be fully rotated and zoomed for a stationary firstperson survey of the surroundings. There are moments, though, during which Ashley is obscured by buildings or trees, which can make proceedings difficult. Cut-scenes are performed with the ingame engine, but are no less effective for it.

The real heart of the game lies in the combat system and inventory management. During combat the action is paused and Ashley can target different parts of his opponent. Weapons, which are characterised by a number of statistics that define their











Format: **PlayStation**

Publisher: **SquareSoft**

Developer: **In-house**

Price: **£30**

Release: **Out now**

After using the targeting sphere to pinpoint an enemy's weakest spot (above right), an onscreen exclamation mark indicates the timing necessary for a successful Chain Attack (top left). Alternatively, Defence Abilities can be used in response to an attack from an opponent (top centre)

relative strength against the different types of foe, can be repaired and combined in workshops. Uniquely, weapons actually 'learn' how best to deal with monsters they have been used against before. As a result the player can build up a specialised arsenal by using different arms at different times. The shadowy setting of Leá Monde also provides the justification for the gradual uncovering of a number of a special manoeuvres. Break Arts provide a one-off special move at a cost of health points. Defence Abilities enable the player to generate different types of effect if they are timed correctly in response to attacks. Most significantly, Chain Abilities can be used to string a series of blows together using BeMani-style timing. This allows the adversary no opportunity for riposte, while conveying special benefits. Add four types of magic, and the result is a procedure that is open to a huge degree of customisation.

The various abilities at Ashley's disposal can be strung together as the player sees fit, and the process of creating custom combos encourages a good deal of lateral thought. For example, using all of Ashley's magic points in the first few rounds of combat may seem disadvantageous, but a Chain Ability that drains opponents of magic points at a rate proportionate to the amount that Ashley has spent can quickly reverse this. Likewise, a Defence Ability that allows a counterattack can be used in combination with healing magic.

The real heart of the game lies in the combat system and inventory management. **During combat the action is paused and Ashley can target** different parts of his opponent

Despite the obvious strengths of this system, the structure of the game soon makes the BeMani-style controls feel repetitive. Combat can be time consuming, and endlessly respawning adversaries become tiresome. Add to this an ill-thought-out approach to positioning save points, and the pace of the game can become disjointed.

During the early stages of development, Yasumi Matsuno went on record to say he expected *Vagrant Story* to take five or six hours to complete. That would almost certainly have been too short a time to fully savour the intricate combat system and the sheer diversity of opponents and items on offer, but it would appear that the length of the game has been increased to some 40 hours by overemphasising and extending the length of combat sequences. Any impetus created by the slick plot and the simple but efficient puzzles is therefore undermined, with the result that *Vagrant Story* can, at times, be more frustrating than it is rewarding to play.

Edge rating:

Seven out of ten





The map screen shows Ashley's progress through the city of Leá Monde (top). There are plenty of bizarre-looking beasts to dispatch on the way

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0







The landscapes are beautifully rendered and the stages, such as this one in Kenya, sport varied scenery. Pubs, villages and level crossings are all included







The Arcade mode is enjoyable for a while, but fails to offer the long term thrills of rallying. While opponents look like they're floating, they can spin out of control

Coming hot on the heels of Polyphony's masterpiece, comparisons between this title and *Gran Turismo 2* are inevitable, and – truth be told – there is very little to separate them. Where *Gran Turismo 2* offers depth through the ability to tune vehicles according to your every whim, *Colin McRae Rally 2.0* draws you in via glorious body deformation and a damage system which can seriously impair progress. Though Codemasters' sequel doesn't instantly astound, it is a more challenging and, in many ways, cerebral experience than its nearest rival.

On a technical level *Colin McRae Rally 2.0* is a finely worked piece of machinery; invest time in the gameplay and the nuances of the title begin to shine through. Drive around Corsica's tight mountain passes, for instance, and you will begin to notice that traction is lost on one side of the car if the wheels stray into sand traps. The level of grip each tyre delivers is affected by the surface it is in contact with – the car is not just one independent unit. Once the player has fathomed this, drift techniques can be used to gain crucial seconds by using the terrain to slow or control the car, gaining vital traction around corners. Sticking rigidly to the main road surface is not always the most effective strategy.



The handling is spot on. Some stages move from one surface type to another, which instantly changes the whole feel of the car's motion

Crucially, *Colin McRae Rally 2.0* plays like a dream. When **Edge** last visited Codemasters to assess the progress of this title (**E**75) much was made of the realistic handling characteristics of the vehicles, and it seems producer Guy Wilday has managed to strike that often elusive balance between realism and playability. The handling is nothing less than sublime, as cars respond with unsurpassed sensitivity. Once



The in-car camera view is for the hardcore rally enthusiast only. The screen perspective shakes to the rhythms of the car, mimicking a head-cam attached to the driver's helmet. Interiors alter depending on the vehicle





Format: **PlayStation**

Publisher: **Codemasters**

Developer: **In-house**

Price: **£35**

Release: **Out now**



you've mastered the techniques, drifting and accelerating out of corners is exhilirating. In order to register an acceptable stage time the player has to flirt with trees and other environment scenery, which tallies admirably with 'real' rallying. Other driving games may offer mental tension, but *Colin McRae Rally 2.0* will physically exhaust you. Muscles tighten, sinews strain – scraping your vehicle around mountain chicanes in Italy has never been done this well. A word of warning: the exactitude demanded will frustrate as many as it seduces.

Both Arcade and Rally modes are included. The Arcade game offers more forgiving handling, and while it presents the player with on-screen opposition the results are less exciting than racing against the clock. The Rally Championship is the real experience, and challenges can be broken down into single rally, single stage, time trial, versus mode or an entire championship season. Extra countries, cheats and cars become available as trophies are won. Though the Novice level can be completed in a day, the Intermediate stage proves much more difficult. After the first two rallies in Finland and Greece are won the learning curve steepens sharply, and merely qualifying on Sweden's snow and ice tracks requires tremendous powers of concentration. Saving the game and repairing the car after every two stages (there are eight at Intermediate and ten at Expert) is vital. However, having to constantly reload stages as you push for a better time can become a chore.

Other driving games may offer **mental tension, but this will physically exhaust you.** Muscles tighten, sinews strain – scraping around mountain chicanes in Italy **has never been done this well**

A particular mention must go to the sound effects, which serve to emphasise and heighten the driving experience. Underlining the sensitivity of the handling, the subtle noises produced by the tires turning on the manifold surfaces take this rally sim into another league. The slightest difference in track composition is convincingly conveyed – hearing the cracking of the Subaru Impreza's tyres across icy roads is a joy.

Minor flaws break the spell at times. While graphics throughout are crisp and structures are beautifully modelled, pop-up makes a messy appearance on certain courses. And while collision detection is precise for the most part, becoming caught behind roadside scenery occurs more often than it should. The damage system, too, while well implemented on the whole, proves less important as the game goes on. This is because the times needed to qualify are so demanding that mistakes can't be tolerated, let alone a damaged car.

Colin McRae Rally 2.0 will maintain a hold over any truly committed race fan for a long time. The demands of accurately navigating some of the most treacherous roads created in videogame history will be just too much for some. Those willing to take on the challenge can expect a level of absorption rarely delivered by any title in any genre.

Edge rating:

Eight out of ten





After every two stages the player has an hour to conduct repairs or tune up the engine. Major damage tends to result in not qualifying

EXCITEBIKE 64



The game's advantage over other motocross-influenced titles is its superb control system, allowing you to shift the rider's weight around, thereby altering the bike's trajectory mid-air, setting it up for the next corner. After a little while it becomes second nature and flawless laps prove massively rewarding

Assuming last month's astounding *Perfect Dark* failed to convert non-N64 owners to the cause, here comes another highly convincing argument. It may not be a Nintendo-developed production (unlike the 1984 8bit original), but *Excitebike 64* carries NCL's pedigree in an impressively dignified manner. Place it alongside *Wave Race 64* and *1080° Snowboarding* and you'll find yourself in possession of an inspired trilogy perfectly suited to the N64's controller – three games that given any other joypad would arguably fail to work as convincingly.

If anything, the control in *Excitebike 64* is a more intricate and technical affair than its two stablemates and will take a little longer to master. Shifting your weight around the motocross bike using the analogue stick is pleasingly intuitive, of course (forward to bring the bike down quicker, back for more air), but grasping the finer points of using the Z-trigger turbo option (without overheating the engine) and the powersliding properties of the R shoulder button is another matter. The only criticism would be that being unfairly knocked off your bike by a CPU opponent when you can do nothing to avoid the collision can be highly infuriating at times.

It isn't a case of blasting, turbo screaming, over every jump... Learn the circuits and you'll find **yourself slowing for certain run-ups, or blazing up others, turning** mid air to set up for the the next corner

The game mixes 20 indoor SuperX-style arenas and fantastical outdoor stages split over four seasons and three difficulty levels. Progression is typically Nintendo: clear a season before you're allowed on to the next, harder setting. And it's worth mentioning that *Excitebike 64*'s later levels are ruthless, requiring you to judge your jumps and negotiate tracks to a tee, something that only becomes possible after you've played them a





Format: **Nintendo 64**

Publisher: **Nintendo**

Developer: **Left Field**

Price: **$50 (£35)**

Release: **Out now (US)**

September (UK)











Excitebike 64 **alternates between varied outdoor fictitious tracks and supercross-style stadium arenas (outdoor/indoor), both types increasing in complexity the further you get into the game. Fourplayer mode is simplified fun, while stunt session, desert option and football are all fairly addictive**

few times. Yet this is the elegance of the game – it's not simply a case of blasting, turbo screaming, over every jump unless you enjoy crossing the finish line last. Learn the circuits and you'll find yourself slowing down for certain run ups, or blazing up others, turning mid air to set up the bike for the next corner, always looking for the smoothest ride around the track. As you power your way through the game, you'll notice an increase in the number of alternate routes and hidden shortcuts in the later tracks – welcome inclusions, as any reason to stray off the racing path always ups the gameplay ante.

As are the extra games. Initially, along with the original *Excitebike*, only the randomly regenerating desert environment and stunt track are unlocked, but every completed difficulty level opens up a new game. The first of these is an option for two or four players to engage in a game of motorbike football, with predictably riotous results. Better still is the hillclimb challenge, which times you over three stages of increasing difficulty and – like the main game – offers excellent replayability. Last, though hardly least, is another addictive version of *Excitebike*, this time in 3D (though it can still be played isometrically should you wish).

To this add optional fourplayer action for exhibition races (though frame rate and draw distance problems do occur), a one-on-one challenge cup, a custom season (where you select five tracks from the 20 available), and a friendly track editor. Occasional frustrations aside, this is easily the best-structured and most enjoyable motocross package around. That UK gamers will have to wait until September for a PAL release is shameful.

Edge rating:

Eight out of ten





Of the enjoyable six bonus games on offer, *Excitebike 3D* (left) and the supremely addictive Hillclimb are by far the most playable of the bunch

IN COLD BLOOD









In this sequence (top left to above left) Spectre, a Terminator-like robot, pursues Cord through the level. It must be destroyed by operating the giant crushing arm. There are few indications that this is the course of action to be taken, however, and numerous deaths and reloading must be endured first

With the exception of *Myst* (which sold an obscene number of copies for such an uninspiring title), point-and-click adventure games have never appealed to more than a small sector of the gaming community. While the enjoyable *Broken Sword* series won many over with its clever plotting and simple interface, the genre has since failed to look in any direction other than to the past.

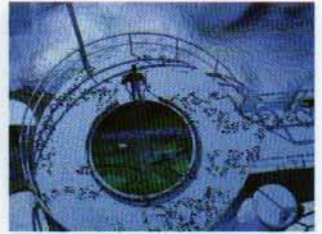
In Cold Blood, which comes from *Broken Sword* developer Revolution Software, makes many of the mistakes which infuriated and probably alienated many gamers from the genre during its experimental heyday. An attempt has been made to incorporate a control mechanism more akin to the *Resident Evil* titles than the traditional point-and-click yarns, but it soon becomes apparent that the mouse arrow served a fundamental purpose within these often complex environments. Within seconds the player could highlight objects which could be interacted with, reducing potential frustration. While Konami's horror survival series overcame these difficulties by having relevant objects sparkle, *In Cold Blood* opts to leave it to the player to randomly and tediously try to interact with everything.

Some might argue that this places a healthy emphasis on the perception and diligence of the player, flattering rather than insulting the intelligence. This could have been the case had the control and animation of the central character, John Cord, been fluid and responsive. In reality the frame rate is shocking at times and the hero moves around his world with an unconventional jerkiness only bettered in its peculiarity by the late Max Wall. Climbing ladders, walking around tables and going through open doorways present the player with some of the more challenging moments in the game.

On a more positive note, the narrative is delivered well, using concise and energetic bursts of FMV. The central premise is exemplary: Cord is being tortured by his captors and the missions are played out in his imagination through flashbacks. At key moments the present swims back into view, which is when the next objective must be completed.

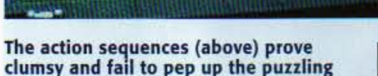
The puzzles in the game are also generally well conceived, if poorly delivered. One notable example revolves around an EMP mine – an electronic device capable of short-circuiting patrol robots. The mine can be placed at certain recharge points, and the process of positioning it and





The rendered backdrops are visually impressive, though ladders (right) can prove difficult to climb. Loading in between scenes is also a chore




The action sequences (above) prove clumsy and fail to pep up the puzzling



Format: **PlayStation/PC (PS version reviewed)**

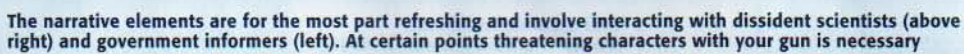
Publisher: **SCEE**

Developer: **Revolution**

Price: **£30**

Release: **July 14**




The narrative elements are for the most part refreshing and involve interacting with dissident scientists (above right) and government informers (left). At certain points threatening characters with your gun is necessary

then hiding Cord until the robot is disabled requires a good deal of stealth. The variety and type of problems presented to the player, which range from smashing windows with particle accelerators to uncoupling land trains loaded with a time bomb, is equally laudable. However, if this sounds dynamic and exciting then apologies are due. In general, the manner in which the player must go about finding out what to do and then actually coming to terms with the unwieldy interface makes the blood positively boil.

The reason for this – surprisingly, given Revolution's apparent determination to update its image – is that the gameplay can be strongly reminiscent of text adventures of yore. Getting Bilbo into the barrel or Gandalf up the flagpole was often made impossible due to text parsing frustrations. Here such difficulties have been replaced with the need for the player to move himself into precisely the correct position next to an object for manipulations to have any effect. Pressing the 'interact' button next to a lever/computer/piece of machinery will not always produce results, leaving the player – often wrongly – to assume that the object is merely part of the scenery. Bizarrely, trying to operate a computer often results in Cord automatically walking away from the machine and towards a door on the opposite side of the room.

Cord is being tortured by his captors and the missions are played out in his imagination **through flashbacks. When the present swims back into view,** the next objective must be completed

The action sequences of *In Cold Blood*, though admirable in their ambition, fail to breathe life into the main body of the title and prevent the onset of gameplay rigor mortis. The auto aim is inconsistent (occasionally you can kill enemies standing behind you) and the delay in the sound of gun shots and their impact on the targeted opponent can be cause for a good deal of hilarity.

In its defence the game is massive, though this is a dubious merit for a title which will see many players falling away before the first couple of missions are completed. A wristwatch-style communicator, called the REMORA, also threatens to lift the game above the average, though again it is poorly implemented and clunky to operate. It can be used to interface computers or disable doors and security devices. Unfortunately, and defying all sense of logic, the REMORA often won't work unless the correct sequence of events has occurred first. Finding out that you can't access a computer because you haven't yet spoken to the technician in the recreation room on level 5 can be painful and demoralising.

In Cold Blood is bold in ambition and epic in scope, which aren't qualities to be overlooked in today's PlayStation titles. The clumsy game mechanics, however, won't endear it to anyone – be they fans or newcomers to the genre.

Edge rating:

Four out of ten





The REMORA device is an interesting addition, operating in a similar way to the Codec in *Metal Gear Solid*. At times, though, it can prove temperamental

DAIKATANA

Format: **PC**

Publisher: **Eidos**

Developer: **Ion Storm**

Price: **£35**

Release: **Out now**









Dull textures, limited AI, uninspiring weapons and annoying level design conspire with the aged *Quake II* engine to render *Daikatana* a real disappointment









From the vivid green hues of the opening level on, the colour scheme must rate as one of the worst ever to taint a videogame

After three years in the pipeline, John Romero's labour of love has finally emerged from development hell. Set in the 24th Century, *Daikatana*'s storyline follows the adventures of futuristic Samurai Hiro Miyamoto as he travels between four distinct time periods. Each period (future Japan, ancient Greece, Dark Ages Norway and San Francisco in 2030) contains up to six levels, which are divided into three more manageable sub-levels. The game begins in Japan, where Hiro finds himself in a marsh. It's from here that *Daikatana* starts to go downhill.

Level design and enemy AI are the most immediate problems. From the outset the player is presented a ridiculously high proportion of blind alleys to explore – a problem that is somewhat addressed as the game progresses, but the feeling is one of a design almost random in nature. The first foe Hiro encounters are frogs and insects – not creatures likely to strike terror into your heart – and while the adversaries increase in size later on, their brains clearly haven't grown in accordance with their bodies.

Despite these fundamental difficulties, *Daikatana* has a smattering of innovative features. The most significant of these are the 'sidekicks', which take the helpful characters of *Half-Life* and *Kingpin* a few steps further. Commands to acquire objects, attack enemies or to stay put can be issued, adding a slightly squad-based angle to the proceedings. Sadly, this too becomes tiresome as you have keep your allies alive or it's game over – which, given their sometimes suicidal behaviour, can be tough.

Another interesting touch is the way Hiro's skills and abilities grow as you progress. Experience can be channelled towards different areas – Attack, Power (damage), Speed, Acro (jumping ability), and Vitality – improving your performance. This concept also applies to Hiro's sword, the Daikatana, which 'learns' how to kill different enemies the more it's used. Other weapons range from the powerful Staff of Zeus, Shockwave and Sun Flare, to the more ineffectual Ion Blaster and Discus. However, using the more powerful arms in the close environments of the game usually results in death for you or your feckless sidekicks.

From the outset *Daikatana* looks and plays like a game well past its sell-by date – the *Quake II* engine it is based on shouldn't be exposed to such rigours at its age. While it would have been impossible to live up to the expectation John Romero himself perpetuated, *Daikatana* simply doesn't cut it.

Edge rating:

Four out of ten

SUPER RUNABOUT



Format: **Dreamcast**

Publisher: **Climax**

Developer: **In-house**

Price: **¥5,800 (£35)**

Release: **Out now (Japan) TBC (UK)**

***Super Runabout* continues the driving game obsession with San Francisco, which is recreated impressively at times. In-game, the VM unit acts as an odometer**



As ever, the range of vehicles is vast – pity most of them handle rather poorly, spoiling what would otherwise be a genre-beating videogame

Anyone quick to praise *Driver*, or more recently still *Crazy Taxi*, for their innovative non-linear urban routes clearly wasn't around when *Runabout* screeched on to the PlayStation back in 1997. Not only did Climax's fun racer precede both of the aforementioned titles with its 'choose your route' approach, it also offered more interaction with the scenery than both games put together. Sure, *Driver* allowed you to knock a few tables and chairs over, but did it let you jump into a baseball stadium after smashing through its gates?

Super Runabout does. That and plenty more besides. So much so, in fact, that it's not unusual to forget about a mission and wander off in search of new locations to park your car in. But even when focused on accomplishing your given task, destruction is still encouraged – the game rewards you financially for every shop window, vehicle and sundry other object you damage.

The other element *Super Runabout* has over its closest competitors is variety. Two scenarios with six missions each (more can be unlocked along the way) offer the kind of diversity that has become par for the course from the *Runabout* franchise. So, for instance, don't be surprised to be asked to go around San Francisco collecting the basic ingredients for hot dogs before dropping them off at the city hall building, where the mayor is presumably entertaining guests. If you play as the police (scenario number two), expect to be asked to bring the ketchup and mustard. And, of course, this wouldn't be a true member of the *Runabout* family without a mission based around knocking a couple of limousines off the road.

Yet, given all it promised, *Super Runabout* remains a disappointment. While visually things have obviously improved since the PlayStation days, all too often the developer asks the Dreamcast to draw more than it can handle, resulting in plenty of pop-up, but what is there is impressive. The scenery itself isn't a problem as the draw distance is sufficiently ahead of your bonnet to reveal upcoming corners with plenty of warning. But more often than not, particularly at high speeds, other vehicles appear in front of you leaving little time to react, with some frustrating consequences, particularly as every mission is time-based. Lose precious seconds from hitting a civilian vehicle and chances are you'll be selecting the restart option. There are also some frightful polygonal glitches which see entire vehicles disappear before your eyes, as well as slowdown, though this tends not to overly affect playability.

What does fundamentally affect playability, however, is the remarkably floaty handling, which, even on the most reponsive cars such as the Ferrari F355 replica, takes some getting used to. For some it may well prove too much as they find themselves performing yet another unintentional and mission-destroying handbrake turn.

Super Runabout can be a lot of fun, but more gameplay refinement and technical polish could have made it a belter.

Edge rating:

Six out of ten





Even if a couple of the missions prove too similar, the diversity of the tasks you are set is seductive. You'll find yourself in the oddest of situations

SAMBA DE AMIGO

Format: **Dreamcast**

Publisher: **Sega**

Developer: **In-house**

Price: **¥13,600 (£85)**

Release: **Out now (Japan)**











The high price of the maracas may be prohibitive to some gamers, but they are worth every penny – the game is simply not the same without them. Superior rhythm is rewarded by vibrant backgrounds (above centre), while poor play sees the vivid scenery and colourful dancing characters disappear (above right)





Western gamers won't be able to benefit from Internet support for *Samba*, but even without it the game still has enough features for a fulfilling experience

In light of Sega's third consecutive financial loss, designing a pair of maracas equipped with motion-sensor technology would appear to be something of an indulgence. As would releasing another Bemani title in the west after the genre's poor performance to date. But after playing Sega's near perfect conversion of coin-op hit *Samba de Amigo* for just a short time it would seem to make perfect sense, and it would be a shame to deny gamers the opportunity to get their hands on such a compelling title.

The basic premise of *Samba de Amigo* is simple: the aforementioned peripherals must be shaken in time with a selection of tunes ranging from the 'Macarena' to a heavy rock version of A-ha's classic 'Take on Me'. Graphics consisting of six coloured circles inform the player of the height and position at which the maracas must be shaken. High scores are awarded for consistent rhythmical accuracy, while successive blunders are penalised by the premature end of the melody. This in itself is an enormously satisfying oneplayer experience, but with friends it becomes positively riotous, with increasingly difficult songs requiring you to set aside of any semblance of reserve as you adopt a series of outlandish poses.

Such uncomplicated gameplay possesses a surprising amount of longevity, but Yuji Naka has also gone to the trouble of implementing a design structure that encourages continued play. The basic play mode features several stages that allow you to choose a tune, with high scores rewarded by new songs being unlocked. There is also a sort of campaign mode in which certain scores must be obtained in order to progress, and a series of twoplayer modes. A co-operative 'Love Love' mode awards a score based on the degree to which two players shake in unison, while in contrast the object of a competitive game is to diminish your opponent's health bar by sustaining a rhythm long enough to send over a bomb. There is also a series of mini-games, such as a variant of Simon Says, and a game in which boulders must be destroyed by sustained shaking.

Samba de Amigo will probably appeal to the most grizzled of hardcore gamers, but it is also a game that everyone should have a chance to enjoy. Like some kind of demented percussive version of Twister, it deserves to usher in a new paradigm for parlour games.

Edge rating:

Seven out of ten



EXCITEBIKE

Rare included a ZX Spectrum emulator in its *Donkey Kong 64* cart to deliver *Jet Pac*, and now Leftfield Studios has followed suit by slipping an NES emu into *Excitebike 64* to give N64 owners the opportunity to sample another classic from the '80s



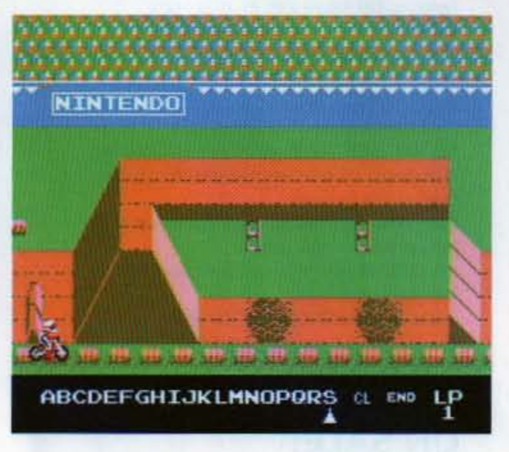








In accordance with great console game tradition, the supremely user-friendly track creator mode (right) gave rise to magnificently convoluted – and wholly impractical – designs



Given its legendary success in the consumer field, it's easy to forget that Nintendo was once a major player on the coin-op scene, with twee but insanely addictive titles such as *10 Yard Fight*, *Super Mario Bros.*, and this, a motocross game whose appeal was far deeper than its crude presentation initially suggested.

But these games really came into their own in the home, on the NES/Famicom, where their nuances could be mulled over and picked apart, and in the living room *Excitebike*'s trials – which saw you fighting both the clock and some brutally unsympathetic CPU opponents – served up a significant dose of challenge.

Excitebike has not aged particularly well, yet it is no mystery why Leftfield opted to retain many elements of the 8bit original in its 64bit update (see p88).

Manufacturer: Nintendo	1984	Coin-op/NES

EDGEVIEW

The videogame world never stands still, riding the breaking wave of advancing technology. In this regular column **Edge** puts the industry's progress in perspective with a look at yesteryear's headlines: five years ago this month



Edge issue 23, August 1995



Howard Lincoln in 1995: "One major advantage we have over Sega is our financial condition"

To eyes already tired of prerendered fantasy artwork, the cover of **E**23, with convoluted Saturn guts spilled all over it, must have been some kind of tonic.

It was this issue, more than any other, that spelled out **Edge**'s stance on Sega's 32bit dream, with editorial that would ensure Future Publishing's post-handling staff five years' worth of invective from some of the most scarily benighted people ever to pick up a joypad.

A report from the world's first E3 lead this issue's news section, with word that Sega had jumped the gun in bringing forward the Saturn launch from September 2 to May 10. Shockingly, US retailers were forced to purchase units from Sega at the $399 mark – selling them on to consumers at the same price.

With Ultra 64 pushed back from its originally proposed 1995 debut it was left to Trip Hawkins and 3DO's M2 add-on initiative to whet industry appetites at a closed presentation in downtown LA.

Elsewhere, **Edge** traced the Commodore story, from its conception in Canada to the recent Amiga buyout by Escom, heralding the 'return of affordable home computing'. Perhaps that should've been 'slight return'.









Clockwise from top left: imagery that raised more than a few hackles at Sega; the original E3 logo, looking more 1965 than 1995; the show itself was less busy in those days; *Mortal Kombat 3* (look, it was a bad month)

Did they really say that?

Nintendo of American chairman **Howard Lincoln**: "I think that we will do a first-class job of marketing [the Virtual Boy], and ultimately the consumers are going to make the decision." Didn't they just

Did Edge really say that?

'There were some great new games [at E3]. Among the best [were] *Heart of Darkness* [and] Single Trac's *Twisted Metal*'

Testscreens (and ratings)

Star Trek: The Next Generation (PC; 8/10), *Fatal Fury 3* (Neo-Geo; 7/10), *Johnny Mnemonic* (PC; 3/10), *Puzzle Bobble* (Neo-Geo; 7/10), *Ultra Vortex* (Jaguar; 3/10), *Gran Chaser* (Saturn; 4/10)

PIXELPERFECT

Every gamer has occasional moments of sparkling excitement, be it the first time *Speedball* booted up, or completing *Sabrewulf*. This month, Mucky Foot director **Fin McGechie** remembers an 8bit hit that changed the way games looked

My Pixel Perfect takes me back to 1984 and involves a rubber keyed machine that was warm to the touch, a tape deck, and an old black-and-white portable that I believe was originally bought to watch the 1978 World Cup. The game in question is Sandy White's *3D Ant Attack*, published by Quicksilva. It was simple – beautifully simple – but had an enormous amount of playability and replay value.

Once you had endured the four-and-a-half minutes of loading time you were presented with the groundbreaking choice of what sex you desired to play, years before it was PC. The game then revealed itself as a monochromatic isometric visual delight. Simple in design, genius in its execution; all you needed to achieve was rescue your stranded partner from somewhere in the city of Antescher.

I spent a vast amount of time enjoying the game's patented 'SoftSolid' engine, huddled around that old 14-inch TV as the Spectrum began to melt. Today I'll boot up the emulator, choose the game and a second later up pops *3D Ant Attack*, but deep down I wish those minutes of waiting and apprehension were still there, and I do miss the smell of burning plastic. I remember when all this was fields, you know...



Fin McGechie was seduced by this 3D. But where's creator Sandy White today?









JOY to the virtual world

US: From a stand situated in the Kentia Hall at this year's E3 (where the more 'unusual' game-related items are most often found), VR Standard Corp showed off its new stereoscopic glasses. Compatible with any operating system and both PCs and Macs, the VRJOY2000 hardware uses LCD technology to trick the eye into viewing what its maker terms 'amazing pop-out stereoscopic 3D'. In practice the 3D effect falls a little short of earning such adulation, but the glasses nevertheless deliver an intriguing sensation somewhat akin to viewing a Cine 2000 presentation at Alton Towers. Having tried both a racing and an action-adventure title with the unit, **Edge** found the latter to be more suited to showing off what it can do, as driving game speeds offer little opportunity to soak up the 3D feel. Thanks to VRS's *VRCaddy* software, the unit is compatible with a wealth of games without the need for patches, and the company even throws in a free game with your purchase. Overall, this is a piece of hardware to sample before purchasing.



VRJOY2000 comes in two forms – the unit shown here is the 'high-performance' model. At around US$100, it isn't especially pricey, but it is most definitely an unusual device. Visit www.vrstandard.com for more details

Studying the love machine



US: San Francisco State University is inviting students to sign up for its new MSP course, Exploring Cybersexualities. Grade points can be earned in a number of areas including romance via the Internet, electronic pornography, online erotica, hot chat, Webcams, vaporware and even the emerging technologies of cyberdildonics. Lecturers have announced that places are still available on a strictly first come, first served basis.



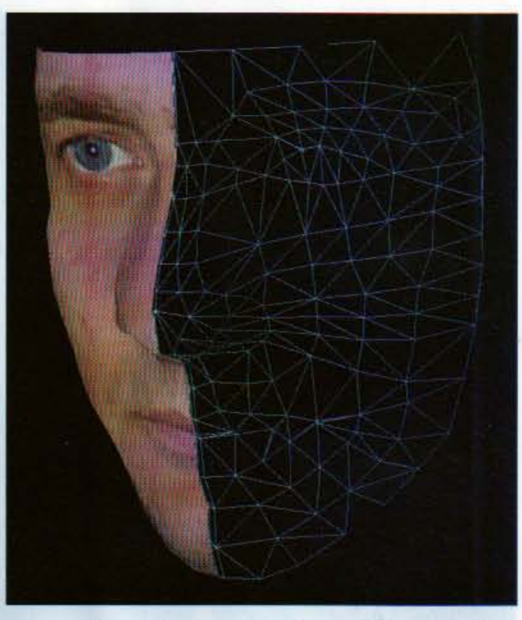




How to get ahead in videogaming

US: Undeterred by Rare's decision to remove the face-mapping function from *Perfect Dark* – "in order to avoid any controversy" – CyberExtruder.com has developed a new technology that transforms a 2D mugshot into a 3D model. The most immediate use is for for gamers who want to download their own features for use in online play, but the software can also be used by developers to incorporate the likenesses of licensed individuals In the UK. Warthog has already declared its support for the technology, and CyberExtruder.com hopes to gain the support of developers for all major platforms. Users will require a download for each platform and although the service is currently free, users will be charged $15 per platform in the near future.





CyberExtruder's key selling point is that it takes just one photograph for the company's technology to produce a 3D image. Who needs VR?

Daikatana brings Mac users to flashpoint

US: John Romero's troubled title *Daikatana* has been given the thumbs down from Macintosh gamers. Utterer.com, a site dedicated to the format, has posted a petition to try and dissuade Ion Storm from porting the game over from the PC. Mac users used to berating developers for ignoring their platform have attacked the title with staggering levels of vitriol and invective. 'Please, God, No!' pleaded one reader, while another admitted: 'I'm actually a PC user, but with the PC release of *Daikatana* impending I might have to switch over to the Mac'. Will Ion Storm relent?







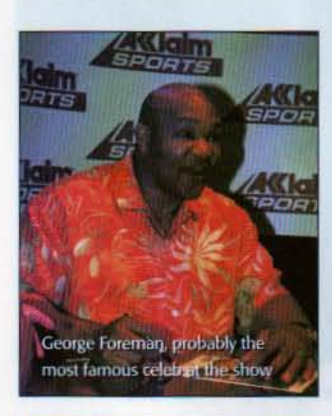
Utterer.com's Web site buckled under the pressure of recieving an onslaught of anti *Daikatana* messages. Id's John Romero (right) may yet have even more people tearing their hair out



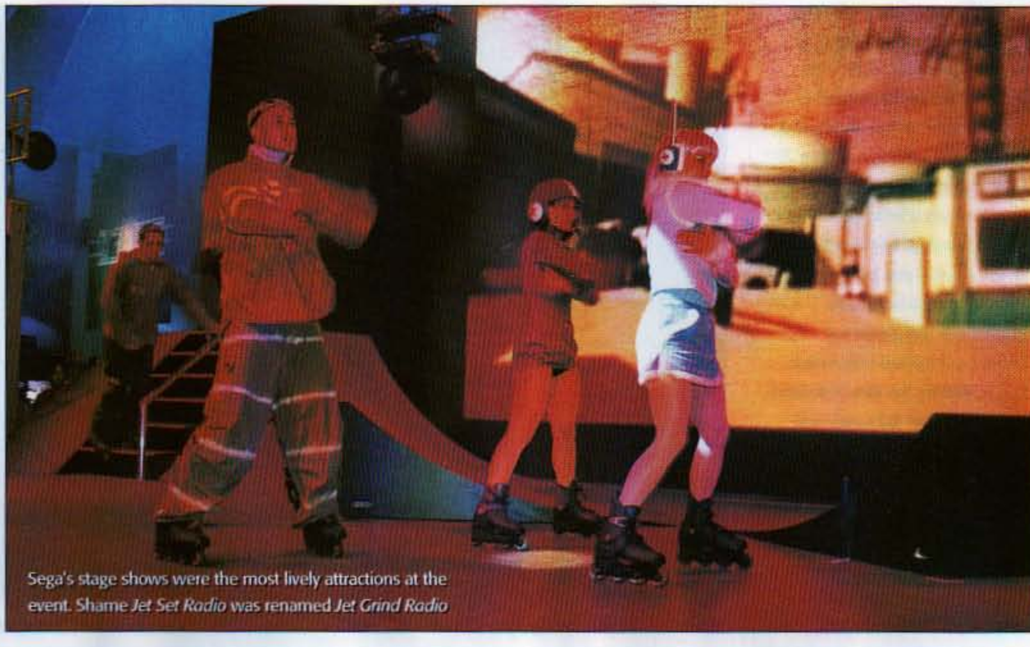


Exploring E3's underbelly

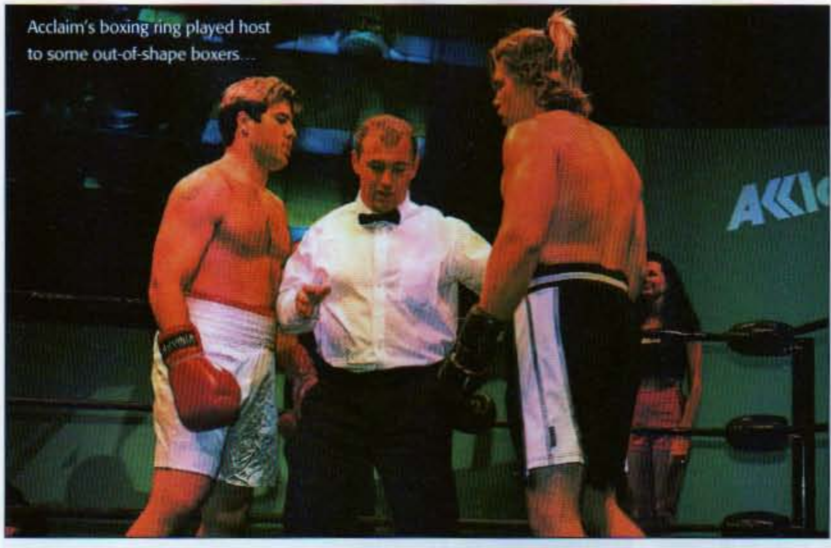
US: An Electronic Entertainment Expo just would not be the annual spectacle it is without the circus that surrounds it in the form of hired flesh. Perhaps the oddest sight this year was Gary 'Diff'rent Strokes' Coleman taking on all comers in a *Dead or Alive 2* tournament, but there was plenty of other stuff to see…



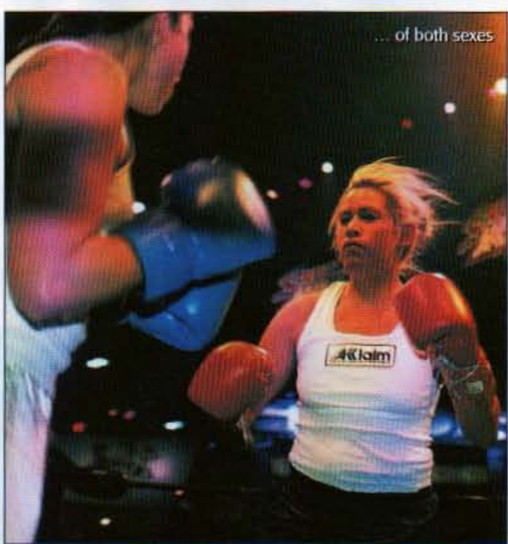
George Foreman, probably the most famous celeb at the show



Sega's stage shows were the most lively attractions at the event. Shame *Jet Set Radio* was renamed *Jet Grind Radio*

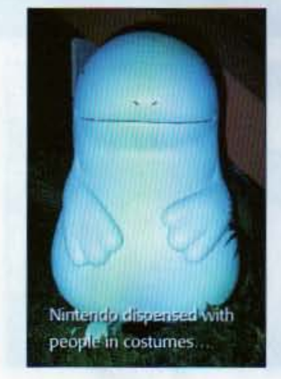


Acclaim's boxing ring played host to some out-of-shape boxers…



… of both sexes





Nintendo dispensed with people in costumes…



…in favour of some distinctly inanimate faves



Namco gave a certain costume its 15th airing



Was this promoting EA's *Alice*? It's difficult to say



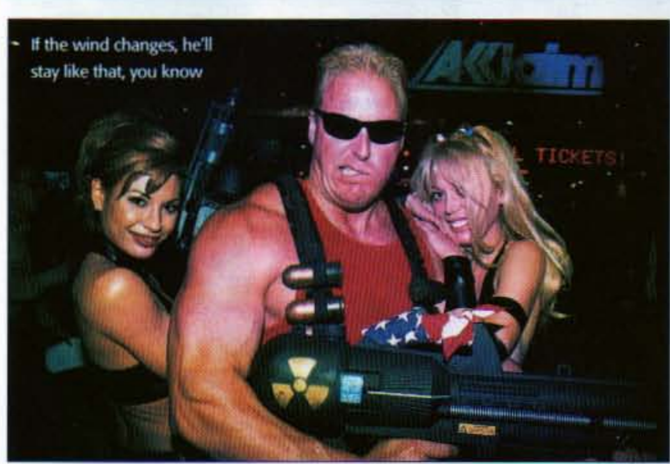

Look, if you haven't got a marketing budget, it's best not to bother at all


Who knows what game these two were promoting? Few actually cared

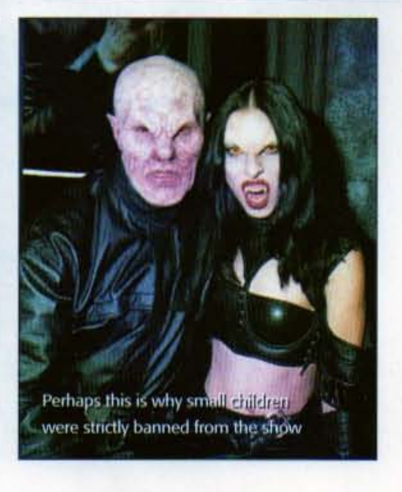

The cynically conceived Eidos stand had its fair share of knockers (sorry)


As last year, Fox made the most effort when it came to make-up. Oh, and skimpy outfits, too


Raven, the X-Box girl, in the flesh. With some dwarven chums



If the wind changes, he'll stay like that, you know


Perhaps this is why small children were strictly banned from the show





Auntie to host Unreal Tournament

UK: A gameshow featuring modified *Unreal Tournament* levels is to be broadcast on BBC2 at the end of this year. The show, provisionally entitled 'Bleeding Thumbs', will follow the favoured format of having two teams of friends challenging each other in a series of contests. *Unreal* will feature in the final duel with a 'recently released' game played in the first round and a 'classic' game for the second. With personalities being skinned into the game and levels modelled on TV sets such as 'Eastenders' the programme could prove a mainstream success.









Will the Beeb's hired hands be able to beat *UT*'s over-worked coloured lighting effects out of the standard version in order to create more fundamentally believable environments? Time will tell

Sony continues to look to the future

Japan: Sony applied for and claimed its right to the PlayStation3 trademark back in November last year. Even before the PlayStation2 launched in Japan the trademark was secured with the Japanese patent office and covers everything from 'microprocessors to metronomes'. A rough draft of the logo can be found at www3.ipdl.ipo.miti.go.jp/cgi-bin/ep_index.cgi, although cynics will note that Sony's designers have hardly searched their souls by merely replacing the '2' with a '3'. Shin-ichi Okamoto, Sony's vice president of R&D, has already confirmed that a development team is working on PlayStation3 technology, which the company claims will 'have 1,000 times the performance of the PS2'. But how about easy antialiasing?



The logo will win no awards for design or innovation, but sends out a strong message to rivals

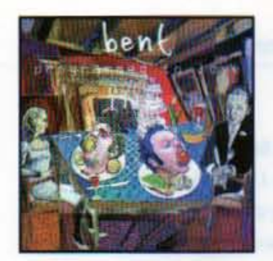
DataStream



Number of online games demonstrated by Sega at E3: **14**
Development cost of 'GoldenEye' movie: **$60m**
US domestic gross of 'GoldenEye' movie: **$106m**
Development cost of *GoldenEye* videogame: **$4m**
US domestic gross of *GoldenEye* videogame: **$230m**
Number of games on show at E3: **2,400**
Number of games expected to be available for PS2 at European launch: **50**
Number of PS2 units expected to be shipped to Europe for launch: **1m**
Most popular search term at Lycos, 1999: **Pokémon**
Projected sales of Sega Dreamcast for second half of year ended March: **1.1m**
Actual sales of Dreamcast for same period: **600,000**
Age of former Sega president, Shoichiro Irimajiri: **60**
Age of new Sega president, Isao Ohkawa: **74**
Number of children killed by handguns per day in America: **12**
Number of times Charlton Heston elected as president of the NRA: **3**
Total US sales of videogames in 1999: **$6.6bn**
Total US sales of online videogames in 1999: **$500m**
First prize for winning international online *Chu Chu Rocket* competition: **personalised DC *Chu Chu Rocket* 'pod'**
First prize for winning International *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2* competition: **$10,000**
Only other game found to be compatible with the *Samba De Amigo* maraca controllers: ***Sega Rally 2***
Percentage of gamers under the age of 18 according to an IDSA survey: **28 per cent**
Percentage of gamers over the age of 35: **42 per cent**







Bent
Programmed To Love
(Sport Recordings)

Given they're a duo with a daft name, a penchant for splicing quirky vinyl cuts into their recordings, and that one of them has blue hair, Bent could easily be classed as Bentley Rhythm Ace clones. However, they tend towards the mellow rather than the madcap. 'Programmed To Love' is an understated groove-led sample patchwork, with the clichéd hip-hop steals replaced by snatches of operatic vocals and country inflections. An album of rare charm and calm.



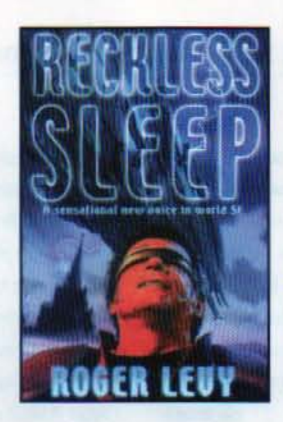
Phoenix
United
(Source)

Phoenix, who are mates with Daft Punk's Guy-Manuel and signed to Air's label, would be ripe for Gallic stereotyping if they didn't dwell in the unexpected territory of '70s AOR and have no qualms about placing the white soul of Hall & Oates in the context of French disco house. Phoenix's triumph is their revitalisation of a previously reviled genre – the approach is tribute, not pastiche – and making you realise that the result is actually the last word in sunny, feelgood pop.



Max Brennan
We Are Part Of Us
And So Are You
(Sublime)

For a taste of the new 'Isle Of Wight sound', turn to electro futurist Max Brennan. His prolific output includes recordings as Fretless AZM and Peacefrog, but his best work tends to come out under his own name. The track titles ('Strange Sightings', 'Leave This Body') and eerie sampled monologues display a desire for extra-terrestrial contact via the medium of beguiling lo-fi disco funk. Mind you, UFOs may already be hovering over the Solent...



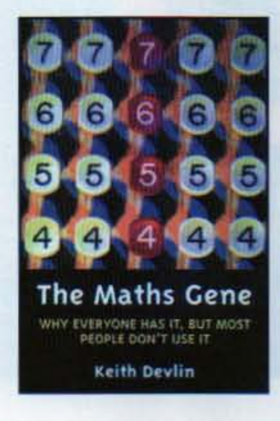
Author: **Roger Levy**
Publisher: **Victor Gollancz**
ISBN: **057506899X**

Reckless Sleep

Maze has every games company's dream technology: it has cracked fully immersive virtual reality. Five artificially intelligent machines can build gamezones even their creators don't fully understand. But Maze's chief tester, nicknamed Starburn, has died in mysterious circumstances and the project is dead in the water unless the company can get a mind as versed as his in VR manipulation to help it understand the system. Enter Jon Sciler, a Far Warrior who survived the psychological and physical injuries of a war played through VR headsets at a colony on the planet Dirangesept. Problem: Sciler now lives in a paranoid, nightmarish world.

Which isn't so different to the state of Earth. When Christian fundamentalists planted nuclear warheads down the Marianas trench at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean they hoped a tidal wave would sweep a new dawn over America. Instead, the explosion disrupted tectonic plates causing earthquakes and eruptions across the globe. As for London, it lies under a permanent ashy smog, the Thames is an oil slick and Holborn Tube station is a dingy bar called Nearvana.

In this dark landscape the plot unfolds with laborious intent. Levy's thriller progresses solidly enough, his style is lyrical and gripping – if (like the plot) sometimes foggy and difficult to decipher. But as far as the genre goes this novel is an 'also ran'. In many ways a cross between 'BladeRunner' and 'Neuromancer', 'Reckless Sleep' is a lacklustre novel that will join the hordes of cybernoire copycats. Read it on a rainy afternoon for full effect.



Author: **Keith Devlin**
Publisher: **Weidenfeld & Nicholson**
ISBN: **0297645714**

The Maths Gene

If you skived off maths classes to get in an extra round of *Doom* (Or was it *Elite* back in your day?), you'll be glad to know your time may not have been entirely wasted in terms of your education. While those precious moments of shooting honed your eye for future gaming glory, it seems your mathematical ability was all the while lying dormant inside you. Where? In your genes, apparently – as scientists seem to be 'discovering' more and more nowadays.

Keith Devlin sets out to prove, contrary to popular belief, that humans can all 'do' maths. Of course, he isn't talking real genetic abilities – according to Devlin it's just a matter of wanting to. For most people, herein lies the problem. But assuming you can get yourself over this first titanic hurdle, Devlin's book will help you catch up with that misspent youth via engaging prose and some effort on your behalf, without the spectre of exams at the end.

A *Guardian* columnist, former editor of *Focus* magazine and maths professor, Devlin's explanations of complex mathematical conundrums in layman's terms are brilliantly simple. His argument goes: mathematicians think in a highly conceptual world, most other people don't. Learn to think this way and maths becomes a lot less daunting.

Devlin quotes mathematician Gian Carlo Rota who wrote: 'Of all escapes from reality, mathematics is the most successful ever. It is a fantasy that becomes all the more addictive because it works'. Substitute 'mathematics' with 'videogames' and **Edge** would agree. As it stands, reading 'The Maths Gene' is nevertheless a worthwhile investment in your brain.



INTERNET
Site: The Skam
URL: www.skam.com

Greed seems to have overtaken creativity as the watchword of the Internet of late, which makes a site like The Skam all the more refreshing. Sign up and every fortnight chaotic, endearingly lo-fi reportage from the wonderful world of contemporary music will be delivered free to your inbox. The zine has written and video elements, and embraces everything from Norwegian drum 'n' bass to indie weekenders in Camber Sands – keeping its tongue firmly in its cheek throughout. Enduring the download time for the moving pictures is recommended, with sights like the Naked DJ slaughtering a tune, the ritual smashing of the worst record of the fortnight, and more videos, interviews and loopy interludes than you can shake a stick at denied you otherwise. The presenter's barely supressed flirt-cum-pisstake chimes in nicely with the more direct humour of the text, and the end result has attitude to burn. If you're looking for Internet inspiration and are tired of the uptight, City-funded, one-dimensional sites currently trying to buy your eye time, there are worse places you can go than on The Skam.



VIEWPOINT

EXPRESS YOURSELF IN **EDGE** – WRITE TO: LETTERS, **EDGE**, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH BA1 2BW (email: **edge@futurenet.co.uk**)

Let's get this clear first of all: I'm not a killjoy. Yet because I happen to have a strong view towards the potential harm of violent games I am immediately deemed one by the gaming public. Recently my concern was drawn to your article on the game *Jet Set Radio*. How can you fail to be just a bit disturbed by a game that seemingly glorifies the defacing of public streets and buildings?

Edge seemed extremely (but uncharacteristically) naïve of its potential social harm. I am aware that it isn't really your responsibility to criticise the potential social impact of a game, but something inside me feels you really should be more careful with your comments. Even though such a game may not have an immediate effect on the younger generation, what it will do is contribute to the desensitisation of children's attitudes to certain anti-social behaviours. The *JSR* developers have created an original game at the expense of potentially disrupting children's morals. Which is more important?

Please can **Edge** not belittle the potential for long-term harm from games such as these. Remember that popular culture spawns new sets of trends. Just look at *Pokémon*. Now translate the effect *JSR* and the like could have. I bet you would be happy if you found your front door covered in a kid's own personal *JSR* tag marking his territory. You may say it would not have this direct effect on children, as they can make distinctions between real and virtual environments, but you are overestimating the power of the conscience.

These games will help in desensitising children from violence and anti-social behaviour and unfortunately the morals they apply to their computer will no longer be so different from theirs in 'reality', especially so for those kids who are more vulnerable. I'm not spoiling your fun, I'm just concerned.

Stephen Dinkeldein, via email

Isn't *Jet Set Radio*'s originality more important than its 'moral values'? Sega would claim so. What do other readers think? Opinions, please.



Stephen Dinkeldein believes that content like this will contribute negatively to society

I wonder how many people have responded to your first PS2 reviews. As many as those who have been complaining at your alleged PS2 bias? Never mind, you know you'll never win.

In response to these first reviews we ought to reflect on other console launches. I can barely remember the launch games for the first PlayStation. We certainly didn't see much worth playing for a few months after launch. And was that a failure? The Dreamcast launched with a plethora of titles. But the flagship driving and fighting games (*Sega Rally 2* and *Virtua Fighter 3tb*) were as disappointing as it would appear the PS2's flagship driving and fighting games are.

What console of recent times had the best launch game? It has to be the N64 with *Mario 64*. And look how that has fared, and not because of poor titles. It is possible that the launch was delayed purely to ensure that one AAA title was ready. Was it worth it?

There are too many issues to address in a letter and I would like to see **Edge** run a feature on launch tactics. I don't doubt that the PS2 will be a success, although many of my friends holding out for Sony's second machine have adopted a Dreamcast already. I doubt they will buy a second 128bit console.

How important is it to get there first? Saturn took this approach and failed. Dreamcast took this approach and seems to be doing pretty well. Nintendo seemed to enter a saturated market when they launched the N64. Was it because of a late launch that consumers and subsequently developers didn't support the console?

What about killer apps? How important is it to have that killer game when a console is launched? The SNES and N64 launched with Mario. Both games were superb, but could the console have launched earlier with perhaps a weaker range of games? How important is the range of games? Must every console now launch with a driving game and a fighting game, or will a platform game be enough? And how many is considered to be right? Would people rather have one *Mario 64*, or 15 games of the standard of *Superman*?

Whatever the case, PS2 and Dreamcast are launched now, and whatever people are saying about your first reviews, these are only the first games and history has definitely shown us that that is not the be all and end all of console success. If *Ridge Racer V* and *Tekken Tag* are weak launch titles, you can guarantee that pretty soon we will have forgotten about them and will be ogling the second phase of titles.

I wonder what approach Microsoft and Nintendo will take this time. Maybe it will be too late

'I'm not a killjoy. Yet because I happen to have a **strong view** towards the potential harm of **violent games** I am immediately deemed one **by the gaming public'**

for both of them. Maybe the Dreamcast will outsell the PS2 eventually. Maybe the Dolphin will be so late it is launched after PS3.

Nathan Baseley, via email

Consider a feature in the offing.

What constitutes a good game? In light of **Edge**'s *Tekken Tag* review, I wonder how important it is for a game to be different. For example, if *Tekken Tag* had been different to *Tekken 3* – say it was set on the moon so there was less gravity and therefore there were more aerial moves (stick with me here). Then assume that it wasn't as good as *Tekken 3*, would it have been better or worse than the current *Tekken Tag*? Is a game better if it tries something new and fails, or sticks with a known formula and is very enjoyable?

I recall the reviews of *Jet Force Gemini* which stated that it was a bit of a disappointment because Rare tried nothing new. In the next breath the reviews said that what they did was a great success and very enjoyable to play. I loved every minute of *JFG*.

Looking at films, 'The Sixth Sense' and 'The Blair Witch Project' were praised for being different. I didn't rate 'Blair Witch' as much as I did 'Batman Returns', for example. But clearly the latter was 'less original' than the former.

I am not disagreeing with **Edge**'s review, firstly because I haven't played *Tekken Tag* (it's still fairly important to play a game before reviewing it), but secondly because I remember how I felt when I played *Banjo Kazooie* and was disappointed it was nothing new.

Obviously the ideal is to play a game that is both totally fresh and 100 per cent playable. Examples include *Metal Gear Solid* and *Crazy Taxi* (I haven't included longevity). I just wonder how important **Edge** thinks originality is.

Vladimir Imp, via email

Now, more than ever, originality is a primary consideration when new software arrives for review. But if a game takes a genre that has already been explored and pushes it even further in a supremely expert fashion – as *Half-Life* did with the firstperson shooter – then it can hardly be knocked for it.

Ultimately you'll have to try *Fantavision* for yourself to see how much more enjoyable it is than an uninspired reworking of *Tekken 3*.

'I wonder how important it is for a game to be different... Is a **game better** if it tries **something new and fails,** or sticks with a known **formula** and is **very enjoyable?'**

As we pass the half-year birthday of the Dreamcast in the UK, it must be said that things are looking extremely bright for Sega's über-console. Although there are still some problems that need addressing, generally the machine and the company look to be in a fairly healthy position in readiness for the onslaught of PlayStation2.

Software companies look like they're really coming to grips with the machine now, and with gems such as *Ecco*, *Black & White*, *Dead Or Alive 2*, *MSR*, *Code Veronica*, *Jet Set Radio* and, of course, *Shenmue*, the games side is really starting to hot up. Even the much-maligned Internet aspect of the machine is looking rosier – online games are now playable (albeit 'classics' like Connect 4 and Battleships), with proper games to follow which can only boost the machine's validity.

However, as pleased as I am with the Dreamcast and its games, I still have some niggling doubts. Maybe it's the spectre of the Saturn still hanging over Sega. If you pop into Dreamarena's chat rooms or notice boards, among the usual banter and abuse are some fairly valid concerns expressed between Dreamcast users: where's the marketing, where's the proper online gaming, and where's the improved browser for Dreamcast Europe? And as much as I love Sega – and always have – I have to agree.

Sega has a superb machine, but it's extremely disheartening when all you hear is PS2 this and PS2 that, mainly due to advertising, retail chain stores and lack of Dreamcast coverage in the media. The adverts for *Bass Fishing* are a start, but why not take a leaf out of Sony's book and show the exclusive and almost-released games? Show *MSR* during the adverts of F1 on ITV; show *SWWS Euro Edition* during ads at the FA Cup; show *Crazy Taxi* during ads of 'The Bill' (maybe that last one isn't such a good idea, but you get my drift).

Also, there are some major concerns regarding the performance of the modem for online gaming. With the amount of disconnections on Dreamarena's chat rooms, or while Web browsing, is our European modem up to the task? Many users think not. How are Sega going to ensure low ping times for these games? Also the cost of such gaming. Sega, quite rightly, are proud of the fact that for the first time, console owners will be able to play PC owners at games such as *Quake 3* and possibly *Half-Life*. But the reason online gaming is so popular with PC owners is that they can pay a flat monthly rate for the privilege. This isn't possible for Dreamcast owners yet, and that could be the stumbling block for Sega to overcome. My last bill was £140, for heaven's sake! What are Sega's plans regarding this?

Don't get me wrong, I love my machine and await the next few months fervently. But please, Sega, you have a brilliant machine and a fantastic opportunity to revolutionise console gaming. Don't let it slip away this time.

Danny Edgar, via email

You will have noticed that **Edge**'s Dreamcast feature has been postponed again. Rest assured, all these issues will be addressed next month. Honest.

Do you think there's a chance Nintendo might re-release the SNES, or at least some kind of massive compilation pack comprising all the best games from that format? I simply must play *Metroid* again, along with *Zelda III*, *Mario World*, *Yoshi's Island*, *Mario Kart*, *Rock'n'Roll Racing*, *Secret of Mana*, *Zombies* and countless others I've no doubt forgotten.

Sadly I broke my SNES after I punched it when the CPU cheated just one time too many while

playing *F Zero* (sad but true). They really need to start hiring some AI programmers at NCL.

Steve Virgo, via email

You can easily pick up a SNES and a pile of old classics via online auction. Try eBay (www.ebay.co.uk), avoid over-optimistic sellers, and it could be the best £50 you spend this year.

I'm writing to disagree with the current slagging of the variety and quality of games available in the multimedia entertainment world at the moment. I can't believe that your average clued-up gamer can't find enough games to satisfy his or her needs, when I find it incredibly hard to even dent the surface of the games I want to play.

Even narrowing it down to class-A games, browsing through any shiny American mag reveals at least ten RPGs that redefine the genre, 15 wrestling and 27 American footie games, and when you add to that all the action/adventure *Metal Gear* rip-offs and cute 3D platform sequels, you've got all your quality time with the girlfriend threatened.

Not to mention buying a PC/ X-Box and playing spacey RTS games for 15-hour stretches, buying a Dreamcast and completing *Soul Calibur* and *Shenmue* and buying back the N64 I sold so I can play *Perfect Dark* and *Zelda Gaiden*.

Hopefully I'll be about halfway through these tasks when the PS2 comes out with a greatly improved arsenal of revolutionary emotional software. The thing is, I really promised myself I'd get around to playing *Ultima Online* for a month or two, and after that I've got *Final Fantasy IX*, *X* and the all-encompassing Worldnet online universe of *XI* to play. Oh, and finishing *Pokémon*.

This situation would be fine if this letter was ironic, but I've got a girlfriend, a games addiction and a disposable income, and there are just too many games to play as it is. So I don't want to hear any more talk of there being no decent games any more.

Dan Croucher, via email

Just what was the point of Daniel Nemenyi's letter in E84? Was he saying that UK gamers have no sense by continually buying *FIFA*, that worldwide consumers have no sense by not buying *Jet Force Gemini*, or that the industry is totally messed up? Gamers are not like football supporters, at least not in the way they select their purchases. Patriotism has little, if anything, to do with it. Granted, the vast majority of people who purchase *FIFA* buy it because of the brand, the licence and the hyperbole surrounding it, but the fact that *Actua* is a UK-coded game doesn't mean UK buyers will automatically boycott *FIFA* because it is published by EA.

As for his comment on overseas industries, he was right, it was 'a bit harsh'. The US and Japanese, like us, buy products that they feel are worthy of their time and effort, which is why *GoldenEye* sold as well as it did, even though it was a British game. His point about poor *JFG* sales in America was particularly dull – having unfortunately owned the game I am easily able to justify the sales figures.

Nemenyi was right in one case – there is more to Britain than the Spice Girls. There are codeshops that churn out great games – developers like Rare, Psygnosis and Lionhead. But a great game will distinguish itself from just a good one and will sell accordingly. Frankly, I think it's appalling that someone would stoop so low as to suggest people shouldn't buy a good game because of its origin. Perhaps Nemenyi dislikes *Pokémon* because its slogan is 'Gotta Catch 'Em All!' and not 'God Save The Queen'.

Jonathan Sekhar, via email

I wish to end the debate surrounding emotional content within videogames perpetuated by Scott Scott in E85. Aren't emotions the reason videogames exist? Admittedly we don't have emotions shown by videogame characters, but who wants it? I would much rather have my own feelings of satisfaction when I defeat Sniper Wolf in *MGS*, or feel like I'm king of the road when I beat the black car in *Ridge Racer*. The sooner that all games designers and producers realise that they only have to provide the theatre within which our own emotions can be manipulated, the better. Anyone for *Gauntlet*?

Eddie McKeown, via email

'Aren't emotions the reason **videogames exist?** Admittedly **we don't have emotions** shown by videogame characters, but **who wants it?** I would rather have my **own feelings** of satisfaction'

It seems to me that Phil Harrison's arguments in favour of a 'new methodology' ['The future of PlayStation 2', E85] do not really bear close scrutiny. What he says, in essence, is that in order to maximise the potential of the PS2 coders have to come to terms with a 'synthesis' programming model. No doubt this is true but it does not mean that the synthesis model is a desirable method of programming.

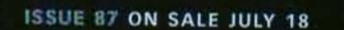
The traditional methodology (as employed in PCs, Dreamcast, X-Box and probably Dolphin too) is already far in advance of PS2's capabilities. The current nVidia-class GPU coupled with a decent CPU and a hatful of RAM easily outclasses the PS2. The bottom line is that the PS2 is a weird machine that requires a weird approach to tap its power. And for all of Harrison's groovy techno-babble, the PS2 remains an eccentric middle-of-the-line performer.

The difference is that unlike most funny bits of kit, there'll be a PS2 in every darned living room in the world. It is this that attracts the developers, not the 'opportunity' to blow their (and our) minds with a new methodology.

Jake, via email

I don't suppose that those little blue PS2 feet are 'backwards compatible', are they? I'm sick of trying to balance my PlayStation against the baby wipes.

Cooked, via email



Next month:

The entire planet Earth.
In one videogame.
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